

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Aspects of confused speech: a study of verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers

Thesis

How to cite:

Shakespeare, Pamela (1996). Aspects of confused speech: a study of verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers. PhD thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 1996 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000e12f>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

The Open University

Pamela Shakespeare

BA (Hons), MA

**Aspects of Confused Speech: A Study of Verbal
Interaction Between Confused and Normal Speakers**

PhD Thesis

**Centre for Sociology and Social Research
School of Education**

February 1996

DX191626
UNRESTRICTED

The Open University

Pamela Shakespeare

BA (Hons), MA

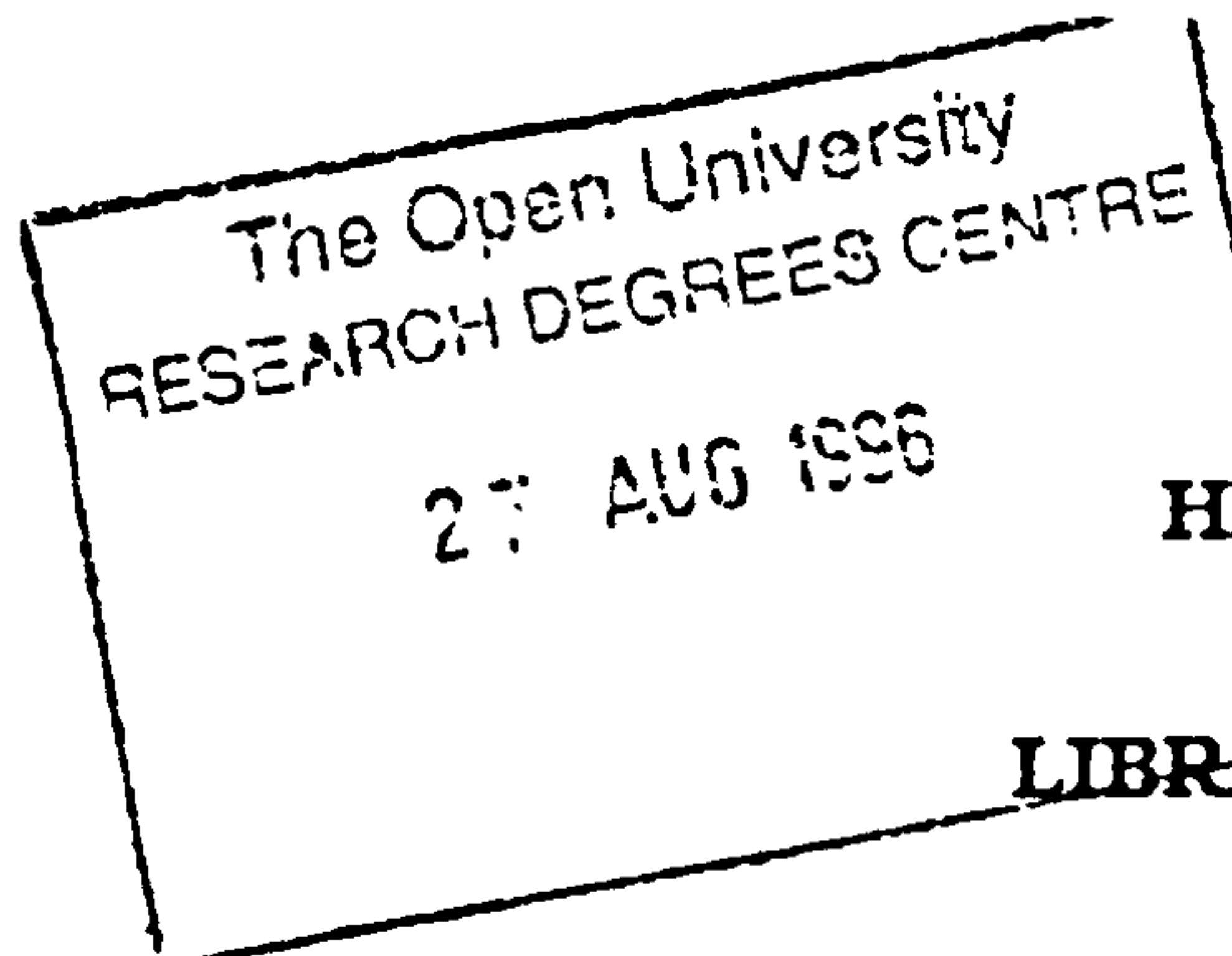
Aspects of Confused Speech: A Study of Verbal Interaction Between Confused and Normal Speakers

PhD Thesis

**Centre for Sociology and Social Research
School of Education**

February 1996

*Author number : H9660602
Date of submission : 6 March 1996
Date of award : 29 May 1996*



EX12

HIGHER DEGREES OFFICE

LIBRARY AUTHORISATION FORM

Please return this form to the Higher Degrees Office with the bound library copies of your thesis. All students should complete Part 1. Part 2 applies only to PhD students.

Student: DAMELA SHAKESPEARE PI: M 966 0602

Degree: PhD

Thesis title: ASPECTS OF CONFUSED SPEECH: A STUDY OF VERBAL INTERACTION BETWEEN CONFUSED AND NORMAL SPEAKERS

Part 1 Open University Library Authorisation (to be completed by all students)

I confirm that I am willing for my thesis to be made available to readers by the Open University Library, and that it may be photocopied, subject to the discretion of the Librarian.

Signed: Dam Shakespeare Date: 27 - 8 - 96

Part 2 British Library Authorisation (to be completed by PhD students only)

If you want a copy of your PhD thesis to be held by the British Library, you must sign a British Doctoral Thesis Agreement Form. You should return it to the Higher Degrees Office with this form and your bound thesis. *You are also required to supply a third, unbound copy of your thesis.* The British Library will use this to make their microfilm copy; it will not be returned. Information on the presentation of the thesis is given in the Agreement Form.

If your thesis is part of a collaborative group project, you will need to obtain the signatures of others involved for the Agreement Form.

The University has agreed that the lodging of your thesis with the British Library should be voluntary. Please tick either (a) or (b) below to indicate your intentions.

(a) ☒ I am willing for the Open University to supply the British Library with a copy of my thesis. A signed Agreement Form and 3 copies of my thesis are attached (two bound as specified in Section 9.4 of the Research Degree Handbook and the third unbound).

(b) ☐ I do not wish the Open University to supply a copy of my thesis to the British Library.

Signed: Dam Shakespeare Date: 27 - 8 - 96

Abstract

Aspects of confused speech: a study of verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers.

This ethnographic study examines talk between normal and confused speakers. Most data derive from loosely structured research interviews, but use is also made of data from household situations.

The analysis draws on theoretical traditions which examine everyday social interaction. From this perspective, confused speakers represent a case of naturally occurring deviance which allows for the investigation of 'normal talk' and how speakers deal with its absence.

I focus on minimally active, moderately active, and very active confused speakers. All deviate from what ordinary members would commonsensically describe as normal, appropriate talk for the circumstances, in both what they say and how they talk. None of these groups can handle their own biographies, or routine common-sense knowledge, as effectively as ordinary members. However, minimally active speakers abrogate responsibility for context-sensitivity; moderately active speakers seem aware of context issues but may not act in a context-renewing way; while very active speakers seem not to be influenced by contextual issues but maintain a highly active part in the conversation.

Normal speakers may take over the management of context for confused speakers, model context-sensitive talk, or withdraw their full participation. Frequently these strategies promote reasonably normal conversational appearances, but they do not entirely make good the impaired identity of confused speakers.

My analysis suggests the definition of normal talk is constrained by how participants jointly construct social occasions. Normal speakers appreciate issues of context, acknowledging how it shapes and renews conversation. Confused speakers tend not to be context-sensitive in these ways, and their difficulties in this respect and in the generation of an identity appropriate to the event, creates problems within the conversation both for them and for others.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank the clients at the psycho-geriatric clinic I attended and their carers who were prepared to spend time talking to me. I should particularly like to thank Mr Bruner who recorded material for me, and Mr and Mrs Hoy who invited me to their home.

I am also grateful to the consultant psycho-geriatrician, who kindly permitted me to sit in on his assessments and asked some of his clients and their carers, on my behalf, for their permission to take part in interviews with me.

Colleagues and friends at the Open university have been helpful and supportive: thank you to Moyra Sidell and Tom Heller for their help with the data; to Jack Clegg for technical help with the audio recordings; to Mick Jones, Linda Johns and Serena Stewardson for advice and practical help with the presentation of this thesis; to Joanna Bornat and the School of Health and Social Welfare Research Committee for financial and moral support.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Roger Gomm, Kate and Hugh Robinson, the discourse analysis group and the reflective research group at the Open University for reading and commenting on aspects of the thesis in its various incarnations.

I should like to thank Martyn Hammersley, my supervisor, for his careful and creative supervision of this thesis. I have learned a great deal from him; ranging from abstruse points about ethnomethodology to a thorough grounding in writing and grammar. I have 'tried to' absorb all these lessons (whereas originally I could only 'try and' absorb them!).

Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their support and delicacy in handling the issue of the ever lengthening deadlines I was giving myself: my parents, Angela, Kate and Kate.

Contents

Chapter 1: Confusion, normality and everyday life: a literature review	1
Medical and practice-oriented studies of confusion	1
Studies of normal talk	6
<i>Goffman and the interaction order</i>	6
<i>Ethnomethodology and the taken for granted world</i>	12
<i>Conversation analysis and types of talk</i>	15
<i>Grice and the co-operative principle</i>	21
Members who are 'problems'	23
Conclusion	27
Chapter 2: Assembling and processing the data	29
The research focus	29
Collecting the data	30
<i>Interviews in a clinic</i>	30
<i>Previously recorded interview materials</i>	35
<i>Recordings of domestic interaction</i>	40
<i>Comparing the situations</i>	41
Types of talk	42
<i>Interviews</i>	44
<i>Conversations</i>	56
Transcribing the data	62
<i>A first transcription</i>	63
<i>Developing the transcripts: a dynamic process</i>	65
<i>Transcripts and selectivity</i>	67
Conclusion	70
Chapter 3: Openings	73
Focused interaction and membership	73
The clinic context	75
The initial contact	78
The introduction of the tape recorder	80
The reason for the conversation	86
The first question	88
A problem for carers: a one to one interview or multi-party talk?	91
Interactional problems	95
Conclusion	100
Chapter 4: Minimally active confused speakers	103
Participation and involvement: a preliminary overview	103
Turns	105
<i>Implications of minimal turn size for turn allocation</i>	112
<i>The minimal answer and preceding utterance</i>	114
Topic Management	116
Identity work	122
<i>The interview as a location for identity work</i>	122
<i>Carers and identity work</i>	125
Conclusion	141

Chapter 5: Moderately active confused speakers	144
Ordinary talk	144
Co-operation in conversation	147
<i>Lack of awareness of accidental breaches</i>	148
<i>Awareness of accidental breaches</i>	154
<i>Deliberate breaches</i>	159
Interviews, co-operation and face	164
Conversation and identity	169
Conclusion	171
Chapter 6: Very active confused speakers	174
Embedded face-work and repetition	174
<i>Repetition</i>	176
<i>Stories and repetition</i>	179
Explicit face-work and knowledge	186
Occasioned activity	191
<i>Summonses and answers</i>	191
<i>Routine activities</i>	201
<i>Self-talk episodes in a two-way conversation</i>	210
Conclusion	212
Chapter 7: Summary and conclusion	214
References	220
Appendix 1: Research participants	231
Appendix 2: Transcription conventions	232
Appendix 3: Tilly's story	235
Appendix 4: Lunchtime at the Bruner's	240

Chapter 1

Confusion, normality and everyday life: a literature review

It's the body er the body of the er body's stud is studying you know, funny little things, the wife like, she's telling the truth absolutely I know all that and I know but uhm funny little things you know I might you know keep er one of those like I wouldn't you know blow the gaffe if you can understand what I mean.

(Mr Graham)

Mr Graham is one of the subjects of this study. For the medical and caring services his confused speech raises two questions: can he be cured and if not how can we care for him? And, of course, Mr Graham is not an isolated example; he does not have a rare illness. The Alzheimer's Disease Society estimate the prevalence of the disease as affecting five in 100 people between the ages of 70 and 80, and 20 in 100 among people over 80: 500,000 people in the UK suffer from moderate or severe dementia (Alzheimer's Disease Society 1990: 13). Government Actuary figures in 1986 suggested that, by the year 2051, 15.5 per cent of the population would be over 85; as opposed to a projection of 8.7 per cent for 1991 (Jefferys 1988: 5). This would imply that by the middle of the next century there will be twice as many people over 80 suffering from one of the dementing illnesses. On these projections, unless a cure for dementia is found before then, the assumption must be that provision of care will become an even more urgent issue than it is now.

In terms of medical provision, and both paid and unpaid care, coping with dementia represents a huge outlay in human and financial resources. The verbal and behavioural confusion that dementia generates is highly distressing for victims and carers alike. It changes lives and relationships. And, not surprisingly, issues relating to dementing illnesses have attracted a substantial body of research and policy writing.

Medical and practice-oriented studies of confusion

Kitwood (1987: 119) has noted that in the 1970s and 1980s there developed a considerable corpus of literature exploring neuropathological aspects of dementia. The two main forms of research were those carried out by post mortem and tomography (photographs developed from X-rays and

presented on computer as cross sections of the brain).¹ As Kitwood notes, however, the close examination of post-mortem brains frames dementia solely as a medical problem. As a result of this neuropathological emphasis there followed a period when person-centred examinations of the illness were laid aside (Kitwood 1988: 168). However, such technical approaches can make only a limited contribution to the treatment of the living, and a literature with more functional interests concerning dementia and confusion has therefore developed.

The concept of confusion is an umbrella term and is used to describe behaviour associated with a variety of conditions including temporary illness, reaction to drugs, socio-environmental disturbances, as well as behaviour produced by specific dementias such as Alzheimer's Disease or Multi Infarct Dementia (Open University: 1988).² A wide range of literature describes confusional states and therapeutic regimes intended to alleviate distress. Thus, some writers describe and discuss behaviour of people who have been labelled as suffering from a specific dementing illness (for example, Code and Lodge: 1987). As part of this there have been attempts to identify the features of confused talk. For example, Allison identifies three different types of confused speaker:

- (1) Patients who were entirely speechless, neither attempting spontaneous conversation nor making any attempt to reply to questions. [...]
- (2) Patients who had little or no spontaneous talk, but who attempted to answer questions and take part in conversation initiated by others. [...]
- (3) Patients showing no inhibitions of spontaneous talk and responding readily to questions.

(Allison 1962: 35-142)

Consideration of confused talk has also sometimes arisen in the work of authors who consider dementias and confusion as part of a wider research concern with the lives of older people. For instance, Meacher (1972) looks at residential care and at the characteristics and problems of the confused residents. He defines a number of types of confused speech as follows:

INCOHERENT SPEECH This is chiefly characterized by the lack of development of recognizable ideas [...]

Fragmentary verbalisation of private thoughts [...]

¹ Examples of such research include Blessed, Tomlinson and Roth (1968); Earnest, Heaton, Wilkinson and Manke (1979), Hawkins and Phelps (1986).

² In talking about people with dementing illnesses, I shall mainly use the terms 'confusion' and 'confused' from now on, since they are common to professional, research and lay communities.

Neologisms [...]

Verbal restriction [i.e.] A woman who had been removed by an attendant from the fireplace where she was fiddling with the fireguard cried out: 'Don't, don't, don't, go and go, go...go...go...' [...]

TANGENTIAL SPEECH This is defined as speech in which use of words is mainly appropriate and the ideas are broadly intelligible, but the whole statement is irrelevant to the context [...]

Skewing of responses to a preconceived framework of ideas [...]

Perseveration [.] Key words are repeated irrespective of changing reference points and from the divergence between the meaning of the words used and the inflection with which the words are spoken it is clear that the words conceal an indefinitely extensible range of ideas. [...]

Dysfunctional word and idea association[.]

(Meacher 1972: 50-54)

I have quoted at length from this section of Meacher's book because the types of confused speech that he writes about can often be found in my own data. Moreover, the passage underlines the fact that talk is taken as an indicator of mental confusion and, indeed, many of the features of talk highlighted in Meacher's account can also be seen in the more medically oriented work of Allison.

What is significant for my purpose, however, is that this literature identifies confused talk on the basis of largely implicit assumptions about the nature of normal talk. We can infer that normal talk is assumed to be relevant, locally managed, cognisant of changing references and so on. But, while context dependence is clearly seen as a significant issue, the problematic nature of what relevance to context actually means remains unexamined.

This parallels criticism of the use of forms of talk as symptomatic in the mental health field more generally. Thus, Blum notes:

When jurors, psychiatrists, kinsmen, and all ordinary members decide the sanity of another, their decisions are ultimately based on a socially accredited body of knowledge that they methodically use ... The labels [...] which we as observers confront are, so to speak, the end points of much socially organised activity that enters into their production. To accept such end points as points of departure for exploring the antecedent conditions or independent variables that influence the labelling process ... is to neglect the socially organised character of the labelling process itself.

(Blum, cited in Coulter 1973: 113)

In much the same way, the concepts of incoherent speech, tangential speech, neologisms and so on, are based on a 'socially accredited body of knowledge'

that is being methodically used: they are end points, preceded by a socially organised labelling process. But the prior methodic work required to reach these evaluations is not itself a topic for investigation within the framework of this research.

There is also a range of therapeutic literature on dementing illnesses including materials on validation therapy, reality orientation, reminiscence and so on, (see for example, Teasdale: 1983, Feil: 1983, Cook: 1984). Some of the names used for these therapies, 'validation' and 'reality' in particular, also point to the assumption of a 'socially accredited body of knowledge'. Such materials may identify reasons for confusion, for example:

They [the confused person] forget to analyze things that are different. They forget 'as if'. A hand feels soft as-if it were a baby. The hand then *becomes* the baby. They lose metaphoric thinking.

(Feil 1983: 17)

What is implicit here is the assumption that analysing difference and metaphoric thinking are normal. Such therapeutic regimes are based on the desirability of normal behaviour and normal thinking, even though some acknowledge that 'normality' may never be achieved through therapy. What is not examined, however, is the nature of that normality. It is treated as unproblematic.

Some writers have analysed the interactions between people with dementia and those working with them. For example, Jones (1992) documents the volume of words spoken between care workers and residents. Pollitt, O'Connor and Anderson (1989) explore the perceptions of carers of older people with mild dementia. And various practice-based models of working with people with Alzheimer's Disease and their carers have been developed (see for example, Webb and Morris: 1994). Underlying all these approaches is a notion of the social consequences of not being a normal person; in personal behaviour, relationships with others, the business of daily living and so on. Here again, though, what is 'normal' is left examined. Certain capabilities are simply taken for granted as normal, and a person's inability in these respects is treated as a sign of abnormality. Indeed, psychiatric tests may be assumed to detect abnormality even where relatives purport to find none:

('At least she's still got her faculties', a niece said of her aunt who we found, on testing, could no longer handle money and believed Queen Victoria was on the throne. 'He's a hundred per cent with it', a son said of his ancient and very frail father, who according to the CAMDEX interviewer 'has no idea of the day, date or season...').

(Pollitt, O'Connor and Anderson 1989: 264)

In such assessments 'normal' is a social construction that enables those engaged in diagnosis to find some people abnormal. Thus, the quotation suggests that a normal person knows who is on the throne, can handle money and is very clear about exactly when in the year it is. These judgements of 'normal' rely on standardised tests and are taken to be a more valid assessment of normality than the contextualised experience of living with and being with people suffering from mild dementia. It is worth noting, however, that, these instances of normality, such as handling money and knowledge of dates, do potentially involve contextualising features which might have bearing on 'poor performance'. For example, if one is on holiday or there is a newspaper strike this might diminish acuity in dealing with the calendar. Nevertheless, the research interpretation emerging from standardised tests is privileged. Yet, the categories that the researchers use here *are* everyday rather than esoteric scientific categories; and, as various writers have noted, the construction of the research enterprise is itself predicated on common-sense everyday thinking (Lynch and Bogen: 1994).

In common-sense terms most people would agree that being able to do ordinary talk is an indicator of normality. It is the sort of thing that people are expected to know; it is 'being ordinary' (Sacks: 1984). Most medically and practice-oriented studies of confusion use ordinary talk as a standard of comparison, and they effectively treat its features as context-free and standardised. But, as Sacks (1984) points out, ordinariness is an *ongoing* achievement. It is not something that is determined by the possession of particular items of knowledge. Moreover, ordinary talk involves recurrent confusions and ambiguities! There is no automatic connection between the production of confused talk and attribution of the identity of confused speaker. What happens is that normal speakers rely very heavily on context to make sense of what is being said. For example, faced with something that is unintelligible, the speaker looks to context: has the other person misheard, has the speaker been unclear in what has been said? Then they may make adjustments: speak more loudly, rephrase a question. Only if the responses continue to be unclear will the person be labelled confused; and perhaps even then only after other possibilities have been ruled out, such as that they are foreign. The medical studies do not explicate this notion of context. Instead, the abnormal stands as already problematised in a taken-for-granted way.

What is normal is a more complex business than is assumed in this literature, then. In order to understand confused talk it is necessary to have a

clear sense of the context-dependence of ordinary talk; and indeed, for that matter, of specialised talk such as medical or therapeutic interviews.

Studies of normal talk

So, in order to understand the talk of those who are labelled confused, we need to understand the nature of normal talk. This points to the relevance of a quite different literature from that discussed to this point: a literature which addresses the construction of the normal as a methodic practice employed by people in the course of everyday life. Much sociology has paid as little attention to the character of mundane social interaction as the medical literature discussed earlier. However, this has been challenged, for example, by ethnomethodologists. Zimmerman and Pollner (1974: 80) have articulated this rather neatly: 'In contrast to the perennial argument that sociology belabors the obvious, we propose that sociology has yet to treat the obvious as a phenomenon.' Some philosophers have also been concerned to explore the nature of in ordinary language. For Grice, whose work I will draw on later, for example, ordinary language is to be conceived afresh and to be looked at as a project in its own right; its apparent idiosyncrasies to be explored not as 'undesirable excrescences' of formal language but as legitimate structures (Grice 1975: 42).

This focus on the ordinary as a project in its own right is a central feature of the various approaches upon which I have drawn and I begin by looking at one of the most influential writers about everyday social interaction: Erving Goffman.

Goffman and the interaction order

Goffman was primarily concerned with the patterning of social activity. It is difficult to classify his work into any particular school of sociology: he tried to avoid being classified and, at one point, described himself as involved in conceptual eclecticism (Burns 1992: 6). Goffman's view of what he was trying to achieve relates to a study of what he calls the interaction order:

Social interaction can be identified narrowly as that which uniquely transpires in social situations, that is, environments in which two or more individuals are physically in one another's presence [...] My concern over the years has been to promote acceptance of this face-to-face domain as an analytically viable one – a domain which might be titled, for want of any happy name, the *interaction order* – a domain whose preferred method of study is microanalysis. My colleagues have not been overwhelmed by the merits of the case.

(Goffman, 1983a: 2)

Under this broad banner he had a number of preoccupations. Burns notes Goffman's remark that it is in social interaction that 'most of the world's work gets done' (Burns 1992: 18). And in the course of his career Goffman's work encompassed, among other things, a focus on how people behave (*Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*: 1959, *Asylums*: 1961, *Stigma*: 1963a, etc.), a concern with occasions and focused interaction (*Behaviour in Public Places*: 1963b, *Frame Analysis*: 1975), and investigations into what people say (*Forms of Talk*: 1981). Throughout his life his emphasis on social interaction led him to treat all of these areas as interconnected. This emphasis, and the recurring motif of face-to-face work, make his writings a rich source of insight for my study.

Goffman is concerned with 'what kind of self' emerges in everyday social interactions and explores the implications for individuals of their success or failure in self-presentation. And he is concerned about this across a broad spectrum of social activity. In a late paper in which he presents a critique of conversation analysis and explores felicity conditions, referring to an imaginary conversation between John and Marsha, he says:

To be sure, when John directs an assertion or question to Marsha, and Marsha responds by remaining silent, or changing topic, or turning from John to direct her opener to Mary, Marsha's act can be perceived by all three as a behavioural comment, a reply in effect. But analytically speaking, to say that in context no answer is an answer is simplistic. Information derived from Marsha's failure to address John's utterance verbally, that is, canonically, is information given off, not given; it is (on the face of it) expression, not language.

(Goffman 1983b: 48-49)

So for Goffman the context of self-presentation is wider than talk. People both give information in their talk and give information off in the way they go about their talk. Because of this breadth of concern with the interaction order, and the fact that the theme of self-presentation recurs throughout his work as a superordinate organising category, it is possible to take and use concepts from very different periods of his work and I have done this for my study.

Within his consideration of the interaction order Goffman constantly orients to ritual and to the moral dimensions of the actor's performance. Indeed, it has been suggested that he sees this orientation as the crux of sociology (Schegloff 1988: 97). The paper 'On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction' is a good example of his analysis of face as grounded in ritual (Goffman: 1969). For Goffman the person is a 'ritually delicate object' (1969: 24), a 'player in a ritual game' (p. 25) who is able to

'castigate himself *qua* actor without injuring himself *qua* object of ultimate worth' (p. 25). He contends that 'One's face, then, is a sacred thing, and the expressive order required to sustain it is therefore a ritual one' (p. 14). Goffman is interested in the moral dimension of both ordinary and extraordinary social behaviour. Indeed the idea of 'faultedness' runs like a thread through his work. Williams notes that this first appeared in his 1953 thesis, and it is still evident twenty five years later when Helm criticises Goffman for changing the term 'repairable' (coined by Schegloff) to his own term 'faultable'. Helm says he is irritated by this because it does not enhance Goffman's analysis (Williams: 1988). However, Williams points out that:

[...] although it is true that the data in this paper are recordings of naturally occurring talk, the interest that Goffman displays in this data is very firmly located in that part of the framework which is concerned with the presentation of self, most particularly with issues concerning the appearance of interactional competence. The use of the term 'fault' here is part of a vital link to this concern. It may be recalled that a rather elderly term in his vocabulary is that of 'faulty person', an individual who brings offence to interactions, causing others to feel ill at ease [...]

(Williams 1988: 78)

Goffman's preoccupation with the moral dimension is supported by an enduring interest in how remedy and repair are used to overcome problems for the moral order that a 'faulty' or ambiguous identity poses. He cites numerous instances of how people attempt to pass as ordinary when their identity is impaired in some way, or how they undertake interactional work to redeem their own identity or that of others.

Here I wish to draw attention to three concepts Goffman uses which are pertinent to my interest in confused speakers: identity, stigma and face. He argues that people bring to occasions an identity which distinguishes them from everyone else and is used by participants in a dynamic sense during interactions:

When a stranger comes into our presence, then, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, his 'social identity' [...] We lean on these anticipations that we have, transforming them into normative expectations, into righteously presented demands.

(Goffman 1963a: 12)

Goffman suggests that clustered around these 'righteously presented demands' is a characterisation of what he calls a virtual social identity. The attributes that an individual could be proved to have can be called an actual social identity. Thus, as an interaction proceeds, we can expect there to be an alignment process going on between participants' virtual and actual social identities: initial identity markers may be re-appraised.

Identity may be threatened during the course of an interaction in a number of ways. It may be threatened at the outset when an individual brings an already impaired identity to it. In this case people may be seen as stigmatised:

The Greeks, who were apparently strong on visual aids, originated the term *stigma* to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was a slave, a criminal or a traitor – a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, especially in public places.

(Goffman 1963a: 11)

Stigma is a mark on the identity that brings with it moral opprobrium in social interaction. People who are stigmatised are disadvantaged in ordinary everyday interactions and because of this they may try to pass as non-stigmatised (Goffman: 1963a). Stigma can be an overarching identity feature.³ As Goffman (1963a: 14) notes, this depends on whether the difference from others is already known about (in which case identity is discredited) or whether it is concealed (in which case identity is discreditable). The latter point reveals that threats may also emerge during an interaction if the identity an individual puts up for himself is discredited, and this is often made manifest in interactional negotiations relating to the face of the individual concerned:

The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes [...]

(Goffman 1969: 3)

Face is a construct recognised by ordinary members and is a term used by them to describe many social encounters. People recognise issues related to their own face, and face-saving devices used by others; and they can act socially to save face for themselves or for someone else. Indeed, mutual protection of face is a moral obligation for participants in the interaction order.

In terms of everyday tacit understandings face is an interesting concept because its visibility depends primarily on its violation or enhancement. Goffman acknowledges the affective connotations of 'face': 'he cathects his face; his "feelings" become attached to it' (Goffman 1969: 3). The loss of face

³ Indeed, the sub-title of the book *Stigma* is 'Notes on the management of spoiled identity' (Goffman: 1963a).

is a painful matter for the person concerned. Face, when disturbed, becomes a matter for accounting:

If the encounter sustains an image of him that he has long taken for granted, he will probably have few feelings about the matter. If events establish a face for him that is better than he might have expected he is likely 'to feel good'; if his ordinary expectations are not fulfilled, one expects that he will 'feel bad' or 'feel hurt'.

(Goffman 1969: 3-4)

In this quotation we see a concern with what marks out and makes apparent particular aspects of presentation of self. Goffman points to certain forms of activity as facilitating the emergence of underlying images of self. These images can be situationally affected. While most ordinary events and activities are taken for granted, some become marked and affect the image one has of one's self, often in a way which is perceived negatively. An actor may become embarrassed (a situation particularly relevant to this study since one of the associated states that conventionally accompanies confusion is embarrassment) and Goffman (1972) notes a series of interactional consequences of embarrassment often where people may lose their poise and are out of face in situations which do not necessarily expose their deficiencies but which do expose incompatible roles or lines. Other authors have examined embarrassment in institutional settings: Heath (1988), for example, notes the problems that embarrassment brings to participants in medical examinations when the medical frame is momentarily broken, for instance, when the patient sees the doctor attempting to engage in eye contact during a breast examination.

Goffman observes that face needs to be considered beyond the current situation but also suggests that:

There is, nevertheless, a limitation to this interdependence between the current situation and the wider social world: an encounter with people whom he will not have dealings with again leaves him free to take a high line that the future will discredit, or free to suffer humiliations that would make future dealings with them an embarrassing thing to have to face.

(Goffman 1969: 5)

So presentation of self, identity and face are situationally significant as actors weigh up the consequences of performing creditably or discredibly in the current situation. Whatever the outcome of such rumination, management of identity and presentation of self are not disinterested, dispassionate activities. Goffman's discussions of face and stigma indicate this, suggesting a significant amount of interactional labour devoted to the maintenance, concealment or promotion of certain identity features during the course of

encounters. Goffman's analysis of the centrality of this identity work, both to interaction and to personal presentation, has provided influential resources drawn on by other writers (for example, Brown and Levinson: 1978, Leech: 1983).

In all of his preoccupations Goffman maintains a highly individualistic style and approach in his scholarship. Burns suggests that his work is devoted to :

[...] uncovering what happens in trivial and commonplace, or peripheral or bizarre, corners of social conduct, depicting its mechanism and its working in almost painfully elaborate detail – and then peeling off more and more of the covering of seemingly normal behaviour and relationships to reveal similar or analogous structures and processes at work throughout the whole order of society.

(Burns 1992: 16)

In peeling off the layers, Goffman's work is full of illustrations. Indeed on an initial reading one might think he was adding layers rather than peeling them off. His books and papers are replete with footnotes citing newspaper articles, television and radio programmes, fictional and non-fictional books of all kinds as well as anecdotal asides and small tailor-made case studies. He classifies social activity in a multi-dimensional way. His lengthy essay 'Remedial Interchanges' contains 66 footnotes which range from references to Schulz's *Peanuts* cartoons and *Mad Magazine* through to primate behaviour, silent film comedies and the testimony of the Boston Strangler (Goffman: 1971). Using such a diversity of sources, Goffman draws attention to the pervasiveness of social order. For him, nothing can be taken as insignificant in the analysis of social interaction. It is, however, as though we come upon the process of his thoughts halfway through the operation. The initial observation and classification have been done. Now, as an audience, we witness the spelling out of the classifications and their illustration in such a wide spectrum of events and situations that it is difficult to understand how they 'cannot apply'. Schegloff notes that although Goffman's work is generally supposed to indicate a deeply empirical stance, the dense empiricism is often drawn on from elsewhere and not cited in the text itself (Schegloff 1988: 101). Moreover, Goffman rarely talks about his own research strategies (Drew and Wootton 1988: 2). Additionally, as Sharrock and Anderson have noted (1986: 85), Goffman's writing does not accommodate how people 'do' everyday tasks (including work) other than by considering the presentation of self *qua* actor: in other words it begins at a stage beyond description, it begins with conceptualisation.

My own view is that, for the novice researcher, the dearth of sustained empirical usage and research methodology in Goffman's work is no bad thing. The work provides an illuminating perspective on the nature of human social interaction that can inform other studies, and I have made considerable use of it in this thesis.

Ethnomethodology and the taken for granted world

Also preoccupied with inquiry into the everyday world is ethnomethodology, a branch of sociology established by Harold Garfinkel in the 1950s. The genesis of ethnomethodology lies in Garfinkel's work on a study of jurors. He perceived that the jurors he was studying used a series of rules, procedures and principles that were commonsensical: that is to say, they brought a set of resources into the jurors' room that were essential for them to be able to decide the cases (Taylor and Cameron 1987: 100-101).

Garfinkel's work was a reaction to what he saw as some fundamental problems with the structural-functionalist sociology generated by Talcott Parsons and his associates. In his graduate work with Parsons, Garfinkel found:

[...] the overall trajectory of Parsons' theory of action, established in *The Structure of Social Action* and maintained throughout his career, was towards a treatment of action in terms of concepts which were almost wholly 'external' to the point of view of the actor. Action was to be analysed as the product of causal processes which, although operating 'in the minds' of the actors, were all but inaccessible to them, and hence, uncontrollable by them.

(Heritage 1984: 22)

Parsons assumed pre-determined roles for actors in a social situation. Actions are governed by institutional rules and moral norms reflecting an overall value consensus: when people confront certain situations they follow the rules, that is they behave appropriately; if they have been properly socialised. So, for Parsons, behaviour is a product of internalised norms and values. For Garfinkel this approach was deeply problematic. He wanted to know what kind of norm or rule it would be that would tell us how to act in a situation. What for Parsons was an automatic process was for Garfinkel one that always requires interpretation.

Moreover, Parsons dealt with norms as if they were scientific constructs: he did this because he sought to *explain* people's behaviour as the product of norms. But for Garfinkel they are rules that members *use*. Members are not judgmental dopes or puppets but active agents whose work accomplishes rationally accountable action: a complex and recursive process of

interpretation is involved. As Taylor and Cameron (1987: 102) suggest, whereas traditionally actors are seen to internalise rules, from an ethnomethodological point of view they 'design their behaviour with an awareness of its accountability'. It is not that rules do not count: people use them to construct and account for their actions, but they are not scientific concepts. Rather than explaining people's actions, rules actually constitute this behaviour through the accounts that are given of it.

Garfinkel's fundamental insight is that rules can never say in so many words what ought to be done where and when in a way that is completely exhaustive. Sharrock provides an illustration:

[...] a sign which says 'No Parking' is not usually understood as forbidding the emergency parking of police and fire vehicles, even though the rule says nothing about legitimate exceptions. In following rules, then, the members of society show the capacity to grasp the *et cetera* clauses, to see the meanings and implications of rules which are nowhere spelt out.

(Sharrock 1977: 552)

Talk and accounting in talk is, therefore, one of the central features of social life and a central analytic tool for Garfinkel and his colleagues:

Everything that matters is present in overt behaviour, present in talk; sense-making is telling that sense, and sense-making is possible only because social settings and activities are organized and managed in ways that make their orderliness evident and accountable, ways that give a sense of coherence and planfulness to the social world.

(Garfinkel, cited in O'Keefe 1979: 196)

And Garfinkel emphasises this anti-mentalist approach by saying:

[...] 'meaningful events are entirely and exclusively events in a person's behavioural environment...Hence there is no reason to look under the skull since nothing of interest is to be found there but brains'.

(Garfinkel, cited in O'Keefe 1979: 193)

For Garfinkel, being able to handle natural language and to provide accounts is a central element of belonging to human society. As Heritage observes:

Garfinkel approaches the topic by stressing that understanding language is not to be regarded as a matter of 'cracking a code' which contains a set of pre-established descriptive terms combined, by rules of grammar, to yield sentence meanings which express propositions about the world. Understanding language is not, in the first instance, a matter of understanding sentences but of understanding *actions* – utterances – which are constructively interpreted in relation to their contexts. This involves viewing an utterance against a background of *who* said it, *where* and *when*, *what* was being accomplished by saying it and in the light of what possible *considerations* and in virtue of what *motives* it was said.

(Heritage 1984: 139-140)

Thus, every moment of interaction is rich with complex interpretations of context and action by the actors. For example, to be involved in a conversation as a piece of social action is to be involved in an ongoing accomplishment. And, of course, even if some actors do not choose to consider *who* said *what*, *where* and *when*, nevertheless others will build such considerations into their interpretations.

In his early ethnomethodological work Garfinkel suggested that a sensible way to examine the social world was to look at *problems* in order to discern underlying patterns in everyday communication and social intercourse:

Procedurally it is my preference to start with familiar scenes and ask what can be done to make trouble. The operations that one would have to perform in order to multiply the senseless features of perceived environments; to produce and sustain bewilderment, consternation, and confusion; to produce the socially structured affects of anxiety, shame, guilt and indignation; and to produce disorganized interaction should tell us something about how the structures of everyday activities are ordinarily and routinely produced and maintained.

(Garfinkel 1967: 37-38)

This intention was carried out in what are called the breaching experiments. As we have seen, Garfinkel suggests that in everyday talk people do not rely on precise pre-specified meanings. Instead, understanding is rooted in the occasioned interpretation of vagueness, or what he calls indexicality, and in retrospective and prospective contextualising. Such understandings:

[...] furnish a background of seen but unnoticed features of common discourse whereby actual utterances are recognized as events of common, reasonable, understandable plain talk.

(Garfinkel 1967: 41)

The breaching experiments were designed to show up this phenomenon. One, for example, required students to carry out experiments in their everyday interactions with people in which they sought to apply the level of precision in relation to concepts that would apply in science:

The subject was telling the experimenter, a member of the subject's car pool, about having had a flat tire while going to work the previous day.

(S) I had a flat tire.

(E) What do you mean you had a flat tire?

She appeared momentarily stunned. Then she answered in a hostile way: "What do you mean, 'What do you mean?' A flat tire is a flat tire. That is what I meant. Nothing special. What a crazy question!"

(Garfinkel 1967: 42)

The breach takes place within a very ordinary and recognisable situation. Here S responds to E in an annoyed way as though E should be a rational person who is perfectly capable of understanding what a flat tyre is but who

is choosing for some unknown and possibly malicious reason to misunderstand. To question the ordinary usage of talk is an action which is quickly sanctionable.

However, breaching is not necessarily followed by a break in social interaction. This is evidenced by Garfinkel's experiments with the game of tic-tac-toe, in which the experimenter rubbed out the lines or added in new ones. Here people sometimes just waited to see what he would do next, assuming that all would become clear, or they developed or extended the rules to make sense of such behaviour (Sharrock and Anderson 1986: 31). In another breaching experiment when students were asked to behave as lodgers in their own homes other family members had various explanations and rationales:

Explanations were sought in previous, understandable motives of the student: the student was 'working too hard' in school; the student was 'ill'; there had been 'another fight' with a fiancée.

(Garfinkel 1967: 48)

In some cases relatives adjusted and treated the whole thing as a comedy routine, while others sought to establish new rules, as is illustrated by one father's comments: 'I don't want any more of *that* out of *you* and if you can't treat your mother decently you'd better move out!' (1967: 48). However, in the experiment there were no cases in which the behaviour did not create an interactional problem that needed to be accounted for. Indeed one putative and insightful experimenter refused to take part because her mother had a heart condition (Garfinkel 1967: 47).

As we shall see, confused talk represents a sort of natural breaching experiment. It disrupts ordinary patterns and causes problems, though it does not usually result in the breakdown of social interaction. In this way the situation of confusion and members' handling of it can be seen under the ethnomethodological rubric as a topic – a problem to be investigated rather than merely evidence of deviance.

Conversation analysis and types of talk

One of the products of ethnomethodology was conversation analysis. This began with the work of Harvey Sacks and his collaborators Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Schegloff says of his experience of reading one of the former's early papers:

[...] there is a distinctive and utterly critical recognition here that the talk can be examined as an object in its own right, and not merely as a screen on which are projected other processes [...] The talk itself was the action, and previously

unsuspected details were critical resources in what was getting done in and by the talk; and all this in naturally occurring events, in no way manipulated to allow the study of them. And it seemed possible to give quite well-defined, quite precise accounts of how what was getting done was getting done – methodical accounts of action.

(Schegloff 1989: 190)

Heritage (1984) notes that such analysis is, at its roots, concerned with the *competence* which underlies ordinary social activities, and Sharrock and Anderson confirm this:

In the first instance they [conversation analysts] are overwhelmingly concerned just to notice what anyone would notice, to see the glaring and obvious things. If they are going to examine conversation as something conversationalists do, then it is going to be indispensable to identify the things to which conversationalists are sensitive and to which they attend as a matter of course.

(Sharrock and Anderson 1986: 70)

It is perhaps difficult today to recognise the novelty that conversation analysis had when it was originally developed. Sociologists and other social scientists had given very little attention to the details of verbal interaction; and, perhaps surprisingly, neither had linguists. They had tended to concentrate on the study of grammar, very often using invented sentences as their data. Sacks' emphasis on the study of naturally occurring conversations was a reaction against this earlier work. Sacks was interested, above all else, in what went on in the details of ordinary life:

[...] he aimed to construct accounts of how the 'technicians in residence' at the conversational worksite assemble their ordinary communicational activities.

(Lynch and Bogen 1994: 74)

A number of sophisticated formulations have been developed to explain how people handle conversation as a piece of interactional work. *Turn taking* is one basic feature of conversation that has been dealt with in considerable detail by conversation analysts. In a paper which has become a landmark, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978) begin by stating fourteen grossly apparent facts about ordinary conversation.⁴ These are:

1. Speaker change recurs, or, at least, occurs [...]
2. Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time [...]
3. Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief [...]
4. Transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap between them are common [...]
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies [...]
6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies [...]
7. Length of conversation is not fixed, specified in advance [...]

⁴ Lynch and Bogen suggest that a large corpus of conversation analysis work has coalesced round this original paper, thus turn taking has come to be defined as one central feature of the discipline (Lynch and Bogen 1994: 75-76).

8. What parties say is not fixed, specified in advance [...]
9. Relative distribution of turns is not fixed, specified in advance [...]
10. Number of parties can change [...]
11. Talk can be continuous or discontinuous [...]
12. Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used [...]
13. Various 'turn-constructive' units are employed [...]
14. Repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations obviously are available for use [...]

(Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1978: 10-11)

The body of their paper is devoted to developing a model of turn taking which accommodates these facts. Participants follow various rules of turn taking in order to conduct conversation and at any stage in a conversation both current speakers and listeners are guided by this sequence of rules. The writers present a model which they think accounts for all possibilities of how turns can be allocated, notably selection of another speaker by current speaker and self-selection by current speaker.

In one of his lectures Sacks further elucidates the complexity of turn taking (Sacks 1995a: 524). While in a two-way conversation a speaker sequence of ABABAB is unproblematic, the same type of progression is untenable in an ordinary multi-party conversation. ABCDABCD does not, for example, accommodate B wanting to speak to A again immediately after being addressed. Nor does it allow for C to ask B for clarification after she has misheard. So speaker selection techniques in multi-party conversation need to be flexible enough to permit local and immediate management of the talk. And Sacks and others have identified a number of devices which contribute to the orderly and flexible execution of turn taking. Pre-eminent among these are *adjacency pairs*. These are paired utterances where an utterance of one type (a first pair part) expects a second utterance of an appropriate type (a second pair part), for example an offer and an acceptance, a question and an answer and so on (Sacks 1995a: 525). Sacks notes that such devices provide a vehicle for current speaker to select next speaker and that they play a role in what Goffman has called remedial exchanges. Thus, a failure to understand can be remedied by the production of a first pair part 'What did you say?' In this way, local problems of conversational order can be dealt with (Sacks 1995a: 525). Sacks also notes that the use of the adjacency pair sequence can be extended into three and four utterance constructions which guide turns over a longer stretch of talk. Consider the sequence:

Are you going to Birmingham?
 What did you say?
 To Birmingham
 Yes.

This can be described as {Q [q-a] A} with the middle two utterances being referred to as an *insertion sequence*. Sacks (1995a: 528) observes that the insertion sequence is one lawful occasion when turn taking can accommodate a question following a question, but that not any question can follow a question.

One of the features of adjacency pairs is that the second pair part is *conditionally relevant* on the first pair part and not merely adjacent to it (Schegloff 1972a: 363). The occurrence of a first pair part of a particular kind sets up the expectation that a relevant second pair part will occur. And such an expectation has moral force. However, this does not absolutely constrain the second pair part; for example, an invitation can legitimately be followed by either an acceptance or a refusal (both responses 'fit' an invitation). But, as Levinson (1983: 307) notes, not all potential, available and appropriate second pair parts are of equal standing, and participants will prefer to make one response rather than another according to specific criteria. This construction is referred to as a *preference* (Levinson 1983: 307). Preferred second pair parts such as acceptances to invitations tend to be structurally less complex and to require little or no additional accounting by the respondent, whereas dispreferred second pair parts such as refusals to invitations tend to involve qualifications and hedges (Brown and Levinson: 1978, Levinson: 1983, Pomerantz: 1984, Bilmes: 1988). We can see the relevance of this to turn size in that a refusal to an invitation is likely to involve a longer turn than would be taken by an acceptance.

A substantial body of conversation analysis work builds on the idea of sequencing: on the introduction of the first topic in conversation, on signalling forthcoming stories which are going to require a long turn, on the problems of changing topic, on the openings and closings of talk, on the turns other participants are legitimately able to take during the course of a long utterance by one participant, on the telling of stories and many other aspects of mundane conversation (see for example, Schegloff: 1972a, Schegloff and Sacks: 1973, Jefferson: 1978, Sacks: 1995a and b).

Another important strand of conversation analysis work, however, is how people do the work of describing. Sacks (1963) suggests that the task of the conversation analyst is to develop a formal machinery to describe description. The question is how to produce descriptions so that people can understand them, given that they often will not have access to the referents of those descriptions. Sacks' concept of *membership category devices* is a central

feature of this strand of conversation analysis. People refer to each other and to objects categorically: in this way *membership* of categories is assigned. Moreover, depending on context, people are able to group categories together. As Silverman (1993: 80) notes, any ordinary member is able to infer that 'The X cried. The Y picked it up' is more likely to be about a baby being picked up rather than a teacher. Sacks' classic exemplification of membership category devices is a child's story: 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up'. Sacks asserts that hearers will hear this as a story about the baby's own mother picking up the baby and analyses how this comes to be (Sacks: 1972).

In doing the work of description, ordinary members have available a variety of correct ways in which they could describe an event, and they must select from these one which is appropriate for the situation, context and audience. In a discussion of the formulation of place, for example, Schegloff observes:

[...] the selection of a locational formulation requires of a speaker (and will exhibit for a hearer) an analysis of his own location and the location of his co-conversationalist(s), and of the objects whose location is being formulated (if that object is not one of the co-conversationalists).

(Schegloff 1972b: 83)

Thus the apparently simple act of referring to some place requires assumptions about where one is, who one is with and what one is doing at this current point in the conversation. In talking about characterising an event, Sacks (1995b: 367) notes that 'Come to dinner' is only a partial description of the event that will take place but is preferred over 'Come over and have a drink of water' or 'Come over and sit on the living room couch' both of which activities are also likely to take place during the course of the evening. He suggests that 'dinner' is a first preference invitation. That is to say, if dinner is included in the invitation for the evening's events then the person inviting needs to say so, otherwise it cannot be assumed that it is included (p. 368).

The work of describing must always be partial. Just as no rule can ever be exhaustive, so no description can ever be exhaustive: it must disattend to some of the potential referents in an event or situation. So an appropriate formulation from a series of correct ones is partial (since there are other correct available formulations). However, while descriptions and rules are not exhaustive and do not take into account every contingency, people nevertheless manage to understand each other in a way which is adequate for all practical purposes. Thus the methods by which people formulate

appropriately are another central concern of conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists, and considerable work has been done in this area (see for example, Schegloff: 1972b, Sharrock: 1974, Livingston: 1987, Sacks: 1995a and b).

As conversation analysis developed, many writers progressed from looking solely at naturally occurring conversation and became interested in institutional and specialised talk, where the relationship between pre-allocation of turns and local management of talk is important (Atkinson and Drew: 1979, Drew and Heritage: 1992, McHoul: 1978, 1990, etc.). With this interest there was a change in orientation from a focus on identities which are intrinsic to ordinary conversation, such as current speaker and next speaker, to identities which are extrinsic to the conversation, that is to say, identities which in some way involve pre-allocation of turns, for example, 'teacher'. However, Heritage suggests that mundane conversation remains an important baseline for all analytic endeavour in the area of talk. In talking about the application of conversation analysis to institutional data he says:

[...] not only is mundane conversation the richest available research domain, but also [...] comparative analysis with mundane conversation is essential if the 'special features' of interaction in particular institutional contexts are to receive adequate specification and understanding.

(Heritage 1984: 240)

Discussion of specialised talk is often based on assumptions about the nature of an ordinary conversation. For example, Suchman and Jordan, in an article about interactional troubles in face-to-face survey interviews, look at:

[...] the differences between the survey interview and ordinary conversation, focusing on the survey instrument's external control over who speaks and on what topic, prohibitions against any redesign of questions by the interviewer and special requirements placed on the form of answers, problems of question relevance and meaning, and failures in the detection and repair of misunderstanding [...]

In what follows we look closely at just how the survey interview is "in the manner of a conversation" and, more important, how it is not. The constraints on the interview we observe that distinguish it from ordinary conversation are all imposed in the interest of *standardization* [...]

Stability of meaning, the real basis for standardization and ultimately for validity, requires the full resources of conversational interaction.

(Suchman and Jordan 1990: 232-233)

Subsequent headings in the article reflect this basic structure, for example 'Local versus external control', 'Recipient designed questions', 'Requirements on the answer', 'Establishing relevance' and so on. Much other work on

institutional talk shows similar recourse to terms originating in analysis of ordinary conversations.

However, for some analysts the movement to analysis of institutional talk poses substantial problems. Schegloff (1992: 102) notes that institutional conversation analysis is an attempt to 'effect a rapprochement' between conversation analysis and more traditional sociological concerns with social structure. He is concerned with the analytic problems that this presents:

Even if we can show by analysis of the details of the interaction that some characterization of the context or the setting in which the talk is going on (such as 'in the hospital') is relevant for the parties, that they are oriented to the setting so characterized, there remains another problem, and that is to show how the context or the setting (the local social structure), *in that aspect*, is procedurally consequential to the talk. How does the fact that the talk is being conducted in some setting (e.g. 'the hospital') issue in any consequence for the shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction that the parties conduct?

(Schegloff 1992: 111)

Schegloff argues in the same paper that some studies in institutional conversation analysis demonstrate this procedural consequentiality inadequately and thus fall prey to the same sort of criticism that conversation analysts originally directed at conventional sociology: that it imposes arbitrarily external categorisations on members' activities. My own view is that Schegloff takes an excessively empiricist line here, insisting that all that has shaped the interaction must be observable in the data. While seeking to avoid a lapse into speculative analysis, I have interpreted the talk of the people in my data in terms of the context in which they found themselves and their likely responses to that.

Grice and the co-operative principle

Not all analysis of conversation is in the ethnomethodological tradition. Taylor and Cameron (1987) outline a variety of approaches that have been made to the study of conversation. Focusing largely on studies that have centred on notions of rules and units, they explore social psychological studies, speech act theories, functionalism and exchange structure analyses of conversation, Gricean pragmatics in addition to ethnomethodological conversation analysis. The most relevant of these for my purposes here, apart from conversation analysis, is the work of Paul Grice.

Grice proposes a conception of communication that is focused on inference rather than the more traditional encoding and decoding model. Sperber and Wilson (1986: 3-4) note that 'A *code* [...] is a system which pairs

messages with signals, enabling two information-processing devices (organisms or machines) to communicate'. And they go on to say:

[...] there is a gap between the semantic representation of sentences and the thoughts actually communicated by utterances. This gap is filled not by more coding, but by inference. Moreover, there is an alternative to the code model of communication. Communication has been described as a process of inferential recognition of the communicator's intentions.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 9)

The focus on inference and on the constraints and opportunities in real conversations (as opposed to artificially created sentences) makes Grice's work sympathetic to many of the concerns of sociologists whose interests lie with the taken-for-granted world of everyday life.

Grice emphasises that there is an important difference between sentence meaning and speaker meaning in talk:

[...] while it is no doubt true that the formal devices are especially amenable to systematic treatment by the logician, it remains the case that there are very many inferences and arguments, expressed in natural language and not in terms of these devices, that are nevertheless recognizably valid.

(Grice 1975: 43)

He suggests that in order for people to understand each other some principles of co-operation must be adhered to:

We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe, namely: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE.

(Grice 1975: 45)

From this basic principle Grice derives a number of conversational maxims:

The maxim of Quality

try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

- (i) do not say what you believe to be false
- (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

The maxim of Quantity

- (i) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes

of the exchange

- (ii) do not make your contribution more informative than is required

The maxim of Relevance

make your contributions relevant

The maxim of Manner
 be perspicacious, and specifically:
 (i) avoid obscurity
 (ii) avoid ambiguity
 (iii) be brief
 (iv) be orderly

(Grice, cited in Levinson 1983: 101-102)

Grice does not suggest that people adhere to such rules at a detailed level in ordinary conversation but that they use them as guides in producing talk. Perhaps even more importantly, they assume that speakers are orienting to these maxims. And speakers assume that hearers will assume that they are adhering to these maxims. It is on the basis of these assumptions that inferences about speakers' meaning are made, and that speakers communicate what they want to say. He also suggests that people infer at a non-superficial level so that utterances which appear to be non co-operative can, at some other level, be seen to conform to the maxims. He calls this conversational implicature (Grice 1975: 43-44, Levinson 1983: 102-103).

Grice's work has been used and developed by a number of writers and is substantially referred to in sociological and pragmatic writing concerned with conversation and talk (see for example, Brown and Levinson: 1978, Leech: 1983, Heritage: 1984, Anderson and Sharrock: 1984, Sperber and Wilson: 1986, etc.). Additionally, Brown and Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983) have made a bridge between the work of Goffman on face and that of Grice on conversational co-operation, in considering the moral dimensions of talk. This is a bridge of which I shall make considerable use in this study, looking at the implications of confused talk for the identities of those involved in conversational exchanges where it occurs.

Members who are 'problems'

The three bodies of work I have discussed so far all focus on the ordinary competences of everyday interaction, in both a cognitive and moral sense. Indeed, they show that these two aspects of competence can hardly be distinguished. Ordinary membership assumes a shared competence which is acted out in social activity and talk. Payne notes:

'Members' are those with a shared stock of common-sense knowledge about the social world and a common competence in applying that knowledge. Membership involves a recognised competence in a natural language and observably adequate performance in identifiable speech communities. It involves having one's competence to make reasonable and sensible observations and to produce reasonable and sensible talk and activities taken for granted.

(Payne 1976: 330)

Membership is routinely assumed in much social interaction. However, there are categories of person that imply less-than-full membership. One such category is 'confused speakers'. Indeed, the above definition provides, as it were, almost a blueprint for identifying such speakers merely by checking off what they cannot do. As I noted earlier, confused talk constitutes what one might call a natural breaching experiment: it illuminates the nature of everyday interactional competence and the work that goes on in recognising and dealing with deviations from it. However, confused speakers do not belong to the only category of people whose interactional competence is open to question and I have also drawn on literature dealing with some other problematic categories.

One obvious category of less-than-full members is children. In some senses studies of the socialisation of children have long been seen as a social scientific test ground for demonstrating a society's mores, whether in older anthropological studies like those of Margaret Mead (for example, Mead: 1943, 1955, 1963), or some of the feminist critiques of socialisation (see Belotti: 1975). A number of studies of children have been done in ethnomethodology (see, for example, Atkinson: 1973, Mackay: 1974). One of the most important of these for my purposes is Matthew Speier's 1969 study of childhood socialisation. He observes that:

[...] one of the basic jobs of mothers (and fathers too) is telling their children what they are 'supposed to do'. [...] communicating to their children what 'rules' they are expected to know and use, whenever it is deemed necessary or advisable to do so.

(Speier 1969: 1)

An underlying theme of Speier's thesis is that communication of rules goes on primarily in explicit directives and prompts:

- 12. Mo. Andrea, Andrea ((calls)) Come here please. ((calls))
- 13. A. Yes, mommy.
- 14. Mo. Say hallo to her.
- 15. A. Hi Hampton.

(Speier 1969: 186)

- 1. Hey Mike! ((Goes over to staircase and looks up.))
- 2. What? ((From top of stairs.))
- 3. You can't go anywhere until you say something to me.
- 4. Oh, Hel-lo ((Comes down stairs.))

(Speier 1969: 177)

In the process, attention may be drawn to the shortfalls in children's competence. A parental directive publicly exposes them as not having said 'hallo'. But allowances are made because people do not expect children to be fully competent. For the parents public exposure has its credit side too:

demonstrating to the world that the socialisation is properly in hand. These processes also socialise the child to accountability. That is to say, they draw the child's attention to those things that he or she is doing that will be remarked upon. The child learns that not only should 'hallo' be said when he or she comes in but also learns, in time, that if it is said this will become *unremarked* behaviour which is, in the main, a desirable outcome.

There are many points of comparison between the sorts of examples and situations that Speier examines and those in my data. Since children are not effectively full members, much of their lives is spent in social interactions which offer them directives concerning how to achieve full membership. Confused speakers too are offered such directives. There is a difference, however. Broadly speaking, the role of the person with confusion points is in exactly the opposite direction to the role of the child, as Speier has explicated it. The child's role is constructed in terms of building towards a competent persona. The confused person's role is constructed in terms of a retreat from competence. In this sense, what I focus on in my study represents a mirror image of what he was concerned with in his. Incidentally this comparison with children is one which can be identified in carers' concepts. Taraborrelli quotes one carer as saying of her dementing mother: 'They're not your baby who's going to grow up [...] you know with a baby it's only going to be like that for so long and then that's it' (Taraborrelli: 1994: 32).

Other work on children is also illuminating. There has been a small amount of conversation analysis work dealing with classroom talk: for example, Payne and Cuff's edited collection (1982) includes papers on story telling, dealing with late comers, starting the day and adolescent-adult talk as a practical interpretive problem. Other classroom research has focused on the problems of question and answer sequences, modifications to turn taking and so on, largely from the point of view of the interactional limitations placed on children in classroom talk (Hammersley: 1986a and b, McHoul: 1978, 1990). This work essentially relates to how teachers 'do' being teachers and how children 'do' being pupils, and to the resultant distribution of interactional rights between full and less-than-full members.

Researchers have also examined other groups who are, in some way, not accorded full membership. For example, Coupland et al.'s collection (1991) on miscommunication encompasses groups of people who can be seen not to be accorded full membership rights because of aspects of their status: non-native speakers, and older people, as well as children. Particularly interesting

from the point of view of this study is research relating to people with dementing illnesses, with mental health problems, and with learning difficulties. For instance, Gubrium has worked extensively on the lives of older people and in the field of Alzheimer's Disease focusing on how the illness is socially constructed in biographical terms (Gubrium: 1985, 1986, 1987, see also Gubrium and Holstein: 1994). In a paper partly relating to the life of Rita Hayworth, the American film star (1985), he shows family members to have constructed a retrospective of her life which implies that there were many early signs of the illness, for example the pattern of her many marriages, and her drinking excesses. This in turn implies that 'looking back on it' she was always 'suspect' as a full member. In a similar way, Kitwood presents a number of socio-psychological analyses which draw attention to the construction of 'us' and 'them' categories in relation to people with dementing illnesses, suggesting that any behavioural aberrations of 'us' as normal people are discounted and ignored while those of sufferers are seen as indicative of their condition (Kitwood: 1993).

Other studies have focused on the competences of people perceived to have other types of mental health problems (for example, Coulter: 1973, Rochester and Martin: 1979, Chaika and Alexander: 1986). Some highlight how incompetence is socially accomplished being assigned to certain members by others or, upon occasion, being jointly produced. For example, Pollner (1975) and Coulter (1975) both investigate the methods used by members to reject perceptual accounts of others that are at odds with their own common-sense knowledge. Similarly Lynch (1983) explores the methods by which ordinary members organise their dealings with people with mental health problems who remain in the community. Holstein (1988) in an examination of court proceedings at involuntary commitment hearings suggests that, depending upon the plea they are making, lawyers construct talk with defendants to elicit competent or incompetent responses. These studies have in common an interest in how full members deal with less-than-full members, a feature, too, of this present work.

Another group who often have less-than-full membership are people with learning difficulties. A number of studies in this area indicate the importance placed on 'passing as ordinary' by many of those seen as less-than-full members. Hughes and May (1986) discuss the relationship between staff and trainees at an Adult Training Centre, suggesting how both construct a pattern of 'ordinary behaviour' and how 'doing' ordinary behaviour is valorised by the trainees, in the desire to be recognised as full members of

society. Yearley and Brewer (1989) explore the competence of people with learning difficulties in a residential context, as it relates to face and stigma. They note substantial competence in ordinary conversation among residents in terms of turn taking, topic changes and so on. However, when confronted with visitors, residents often use a monosyllabic pattern of talk: a tactic which, while guarding against loss of face by non-exposure, also threatens it. In a similar way, Edgerton (1967) discusses the 'cloak of competence' that people with learning difficulties don in order to maintain face and pass as ordinary people. Such passing often includes an elaborate embroidery of a biography that is essentially institutional (and therefore may be perceived as abnormal and stigmatising) sometimes aided by the acquisition of photographs and memorabilia that are completely unconnected with the individuals' past life – but which are intended to facilitate a demonstration of normality.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I noted that the confusion resulting from dementing illnesses is commonly recognised as a problem, one which has attracted a substantial body of research. Much of this has been medically or practice-oriented in character. In these studies confusion and its medical aetiology are central. As a result, the contexts in terms of which confusion and normality are judged and the inferential work required to reach the point of assigning these categories are not explicated. Underlying these studies is a common-sense understanding of confusion which is never made a topic of enquiry.

I suggested that this common-sense understanding of confusion and accompanying understandings of normality are problematic and require investigation. I outlined several bodies of research for which 'the normal' as an interpretive problem is central. I looked at Goffman's work and its preoccupation with the interaction order, noting the relevance of some of his central concepts: identity, face, stigma and faultedness. I suggested that they would be important in my study because they elucidate both context and performance. Next I looked at ethnomethodology and at what set it apart from traditional sociology. I highlighted as a major contrast the interpretation of human behaviour as rule-governed versus the understanding of people as rule-users engaged in accounting for their own and others' behaviour. I also discussed Garfinkel's breaching experiments which highlight the idea of troubles as revealing the otherwise unnoticed character of the normal, noting

that confused speakers can be seen as the perpetrators of natural breaching experiments. Following on from this, I discussed the two main foci of conversation analysis, turn taking and description work, this leading on to a discussion of Grice's work on conversational co-operation. These two approaches provide the main analytic resources on which I will draw in this study. Finally, I pointed to the relevance of work on categories of people who are treated as less-than-full members, noting how the interest of writers in this field has often been in how full members deal with less-than-full members, and how the latter attempt to pass as ordinary, issues that are central to my own research.

The different traditions upon which I draw do not necessarily fit comfortably together. An example of the tension between traditions occurs in Schegloff's suggestion that Goffman's orientation to moral concerns and ritual (a central feature of his sociology) undermines his analysis of social action:

'What minimal model of an actor is needed' he [Goffman] asked, 'if we are to wind him up, stick him in amongst his fellows, and have an orderly traffic of behaviour emerge?' But he surely recognized that such a traffic is the product not only of the drivers, but of the properties of the vehicles, the roadways, the fuel, the traffic system, etc.

(Schegloff 1988: 94)

Schegloff observes that Goffman remained committed to the drivers rather than the traffic system. Yet it seems to me that both approaches are useful in order to understand the problems that surround confused speech. At an utterance-to-utterance level it can be interpreted as a momentary trouble, a traffic problem: however, it can also be seen as a chronic trouble at the level of an actor's performance in a variety of situations – in other words, as a driver problem. These will be the two axes around which my investigation is organised.

Chapter 2

Assembling and processing the data

The research focus

When I originally began work on this project, it was called 'Talking about history', and was intended to examine the life history of a housing co-operative through the accounts of its members. I was interested in the rationales that people gave for choosing specific accounts of life in the co-operative: I wanted to examine the degree to which shared accounts were evident among co-operative members and how they chose a 'correct account' from competing stories. I conducted ten interviews of between one and two hours to collect the data, and began preliminary work on the analysis. However, as I went about the task of transcribing the interviews, I became more interested in the apparently self-contradictory confusions inherent in the accounts, and in the joint production of the conversation, rather than in what was actually being said. I had begun the project with a simple precept: that what people say sounds simple but is actually complex. Yet this precept only began to come alive for me when I started to pay attention to the discrepancies and confusions that were discernible in the interviews. I realised that I was more interested in the interview process itself and, above all, in the fact that when confusions did arise they were generally dealt with successfully within the conversational process.

This interest in confusion was further stimulated by my work as a lecturer at the Open University. At about the time I was collecting data for the history of the co-operative I changed jobs, moving departments within the University to develop a course called 'Working with Older People' (Open University: 1990). For this I undertook the task of writing some materials about mental health problems in old age. In the reading I did for this course there was a great deal of reference to confusion, and I became particularly interested in some materials contained in an earlier Open University course 'Mental Health Problems in Old Age' (1988) which outline behaviour aberrations of people with senile dementia.

There followed a period of confusion on my own part, as I began to explore the possibility of examining extreme forms of confusion by collecting life histories of people suffering from dementia or comparing the characteristics of life histories told by people suffering from dementia with those of people who were not. In the end, though, I realised that what I was

interested in was how confused talk differs from 'normal talk'; and, in particular, how people are found to be confused by normal speakers and how the latter are able to demonstrate their continuing normality in conversations with confused speakers.

Collecting the data

Given the nature of my new research focus, I required audio-recorded materials featuring 'confused speakers'. I was able to gain access to three such sources of materials: interviews I conducted with some confused speakers and their carers, previously recorded interviews carried out by colleagues, and some domestic interaction between one confused speaker and her carer. My data consist of about ten hours of audio tape recorded materials: all involving people who had been diagnosed as confused, engaging in verbal interaction with normal speakers. During the course of analysing these data, it became increasingly obvious to me that the settings in which the talk took place were important. And so, in the remainder of this chapter, I provide as much relevant information as possible about the circumstances in which the data were collected, and about the types of talk they involve. In addition, I reflect on the process by which I came to have a point of view on these data.

Interviews in a clinic

In locating people with whom to talk, my only initial criterion was that the system (i.e. medical and social services) should have labelled them as confused. I wanted to listen to people whose confusion had been recognised by others as an ongoing problem. This constitutes a large category of people, since not only are there a substantial number of sufferers from various kinds of dementing illnesses but in older people organic illnesses such as influenza and bladder infection may generate what the medical profession calls confusion. In the latter cases, as the illness retreats, so too does the confusion. Although talking to people suffering from short term confusion would have met my criteria, they would have been difficult to locate, interviewing them while they were feeling very ill would not have been legitimate, and I would probably have been a burden on carers. Instead, I decided to focus on people who had already been diagnosed as suffering from long term confusion. This group of people often acquire the label of 'confused' as a half way house prior to some other diagnosis, for example Alzheimer's Disease or Multi-Infarct Dementia (Open University: 1988). The diagnosis of confusion does

not imply the total absence of lucidity, but rather that there is a high likelihood that some daily talk will be confused.

I contacted a consultant geriatrician known to Open University colleagues and he invited me to attend clinics he conducted for the assessment and treatment of people suffering from confusion. I arranged to go to one of his psycho-geriatric clinics for several mornings and interview whoever was there and was willing to be interviewed. In the case of all the people concerned, both the consultant and I asked if they would be prepared to be interviewed by me, and I also asked permission to make and use audio recordings of the talk for my research. Where the confused speaker appeared not to understand my request I specifically asked the carer for permission as well.

My interview material was collected in interviews with:

Client	Carer
Mrs Hoy	Mr Hoy (husband)
Mr Toll	Mrs Toll (wife)
Mrs Pugh	Mr Pugh (husband) Mrs James (daughter)
Mrs Inman	Mrs Grace (daughter)
Mrs Whittaker	Mrs Becker (daughter)
Mrs Bowles	Mr Bowles (son)
Edith	Barry (son)

The interviews were conducted in July and August 1990.

I have changed all first and surnames of research subjects in this study and most place names or other identifying details in the transcripts, such as the names of local companies. I have also maintained the form of names used by clients and carers, thus, when they used first names, I have done the same. (A full list of all the participants in my research recordings is to be found in Appendix 1.)

Each time I visited, I spent the whole morning at the psycho-geriatric clinic, sitting for part of the time in the waiting room or consulting room and the rest of the time in an anteroom to the consulting room where I interviewed clients and their carers. On the days I was present, the procedure for a visit to the clinic was standard. Clients and their carers would book in at

reception and then go to the waiting room where a helper gave them drinks and chatted with them. Clients and carers were then conducted to the consultant's room. The consultations were follow-ups, for people who had already seen the consultant. Each session lasted about twenty minutes and involved the consultant, another doctor, a social worker and a community psychiatric nurse (plus myself if I was sitting in). Occasionally, the client was taken away from the consulting room during the session for a test of some sort.

When I was present the consultant usually introduced me as someone interested in communication, and said that I wanted to have a chat with the confused speaker afterwards. At the end of the assessment I took the client and carer to the ante room. Occasionally, if I was already talking to one confused speaker and their carer and could not sit in on the next assessment, I was introduced to the people concerned by the consultant or the social worker after my previous talk was over. After talking to me, the client would go to the day centre in the same building for lunch or to wait for an ambulance to take them home.

The setting of the psycho-geriatric clinic

In analysing the audio recordings from the clinic not only was I able to rely on my everyday knowledge of encounters of this type, I also had recourse to my memory of these events. I was able to recall the physical features of the setting and when I heard non-verbal noises on the audio tapes I could recall what generated some of them. The following account relies partially on this recall and is not entirely focused on the tapes themselves. However, one of the processes of analysis in this thesis, as it relates to my own interview data, is to try to step outside this reliance on ordinary recall.

Much work on the study of language has emphasised the importance of context. This is true, for example, of a great deal of sociolinguistic work (see, for example, Gumperz and Hymes: 1972, Giglioli: 1972) and also of the body of work referred to as pragmatics (see Levinson: 1983). Thus, in understanding the talk which took place in the clinic, and in particular my own interviews, some clarification of the nature of that context is required. It was a context in which talk was central. The confused speakers and their carers normally encountered a process and setting in which talk was an essential component, albeit usually talk that was initiated and orchestrated by others. Use of space and timing was controlled by the talk and the main event itself was an assessment through talk. Moreover, the illness – the

confusion – was displayed through talk on this multi-faceted occasion, where participants were called upon to discern which types of talk were appropriate for which stage in the event.

A number of studies have explored social interaction in a clinic setting and have drawn attention to the significance of that type of setting to actors (see, for example, Strong: 1979, Sharrock and Anderson: 1987, Silverman: 1987). In his study of a variety of clinic sites Silverman (1987) emphasises the importance of site as a place where the career trajectory of patients and the disposal of the case are played out (p. 10). Sites present patients and medical staff with both opportunities and constraints for 'doing' patient career or disposal of cases. Silverman notes (pp. 264-269), for example, that the desk, the couch and the side room may each contribute towards a definition of some social situation: the family may assert their own structure in the seating arrangements and handling of the child; the couch may be seen as medical territory, with the child being taken there by a nurse; the side room may involve negotiations about 'ownership' of the child. Thus the settings in a clinic may be seen as interactional resources that contribute to the joint production of an event which can be called a 'visit to the clinic'.

In the case of the clinic I attended, the setting could also be seen as an interactional and contextual resource. An overall impression was of a quite institutionalised setting. The clinic was housed in an old Victorian School, decorated extensively in pale green gloss paint and lustrous tiles, equipped with plenty of institutional paraphernalia such as files lying around and pervaded by the smell of cooked lunch.

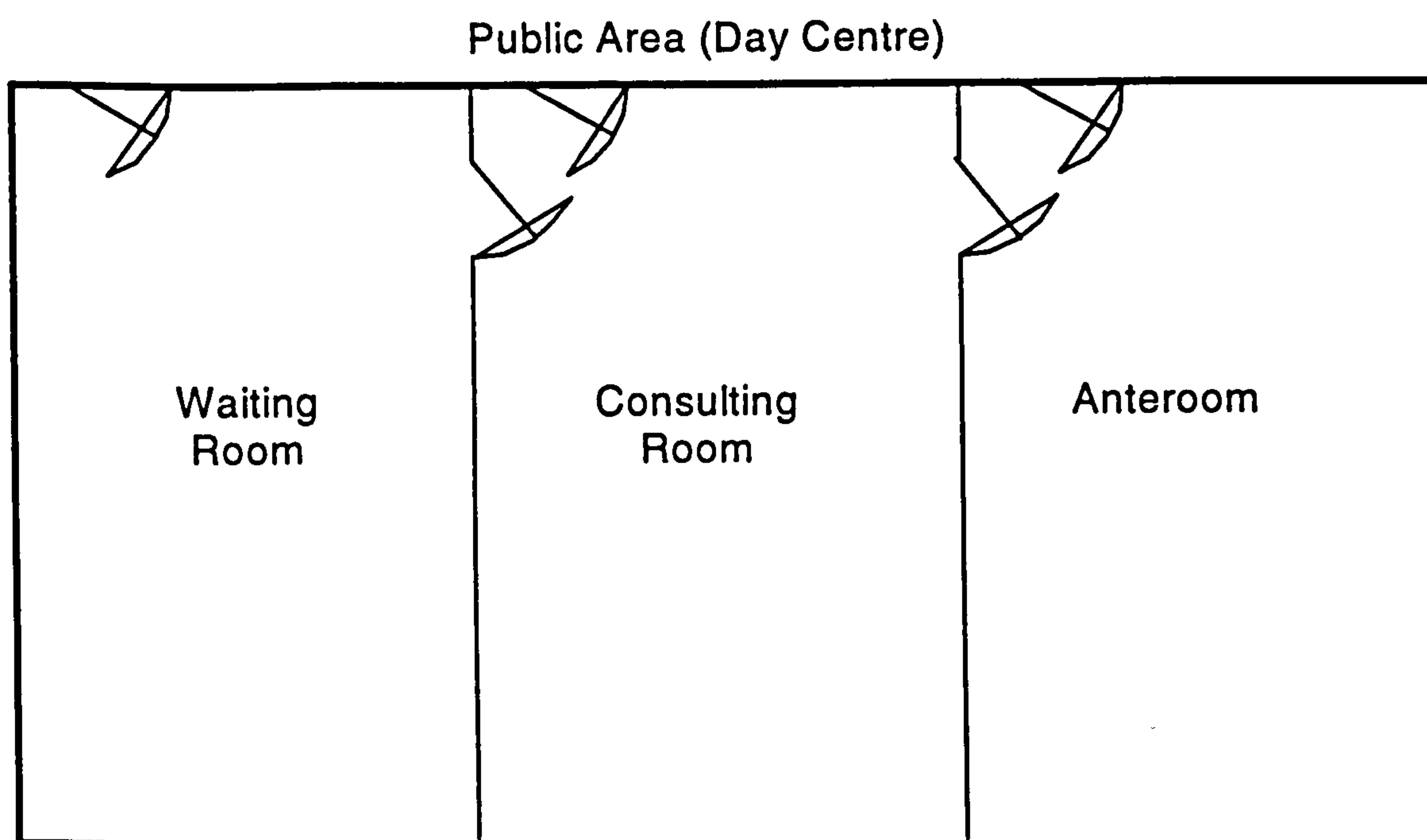
Figure 2.1: The clinic setting

Figure 2.1 shows the waiting room, consulting room and ante room in the psycho-geriatric clinic, connected to each other by a door. This meant that the clients did not have to go back into the public day centre during the course of their contact with health care professionals or myself (unless they went out for some kind of test). At each stage in the process they were introduced or conducted to the next room by a member of staff or myself. Each room was there to be seen as a sub-setting of the clinic, and the people in each room (including myself) were to be seen as associated with the clinic. By the time the clients and their carers arrived to talk to me, they were in at least their third sub-setting of the psycho-geriatric clinic.

A visit to the psycho-geriatric clinic was also a temporally organised and bounded occasion. The first stop was the waiting room. Here, usually, the helper engaged clients and carers in conversation, informing them that the doctor was already here, or that appointments were running late, and so on; in other words, temporal markers were established about the main event, the consultation. This was interspersed with the sort of talk people tend to have while they are waiting: about the weather, the traffic and so on. This is talk which Turner (1972: 380) points out, embraces the maximum number of participants since any category member may be expected to have view on them. At this point in their visit, participants were not talking in their specialised capacity as clients and carers.

Confused speakers and their carers were then conducted at an appropriate moment (i.e. deemed appropriate by the consultant) to the consulting room. Here a series of temporal organisational comments by the consultant and others contextualised the event: about when the client attended the clinic last; about the previous history of the client; about what was going on currently; often concluding with 'Is there anything else you would like to ask?' This was an agenda-led activity.

Following this, clients and carers were taken to the anteroom to see me, and I too made temporally appropriate remarks. Moreover, my comments often reflected my marginal position in the proceedings: apologising for holding people up, thanking them for giving me their time, and concluding with remarks about not wanting to detain them any longer. As I have noted, the confused speakers and their carers had already experienced the setting before the visit when they met me, and my interviews were very much embedded in the spatial and temporal organisation of the clinic. The final episode of the morning for clients was often lunch and social activities in the day centre, marking an end to the official medical business of the day. This was organised as respite for carers, providing them with some time to themselves.

In various ways, then, geographical and temporal markers structured the organisation of a visit to the psycho-geriatric clinic, highlighting the main event and indicating to some extent the status of the various participants. For example, it would have been unlikely that I would interview clients before they saw the consultant because this might upset the timing of the morning, which was primarily organised around what was considered an appropriate pacing for the consultant's work. At the same time, my interviews were closely associated in both spatial and temporal terms with the consultation.

Previously recorded interview materials

A second type of data came from two colleagues at the Open University who had carried out and recorded interviews with 'confused people' for various purposes. Initially, I listened to these interviews merely as a way of familiarising myself with a variety of examples of confused talk. But as I listened to the interviews I realised that, from the outset, I was able to identify something as being very 'wrong' with the conversations. And yet the interviews were in very different contexts from my own. Consequently, I began to explore them more exhaustively, and found quite soon that they

could be perceived as rich sources of data for the project; not least because the contexts involved were so different.

These data present an analytical problem, of course, since I do not know the specifics of the settings in which they were collected. Nevertheless, they too require an examination of context. With these data my sense of context has to be constructed from what I hear on the tapes, although I have also talked to both colleagues about the interviews.

Tom's interview

The first set of materials relate to an interview carried out by Tom Heller for the Open University course 'Mental Health Problems in Old Age' (Open University: 1988). I have four versions of this interview: the unedited tapes, the edited course audio tape, the BBC transcript, and my own transcript taken from the unedited audio tape.¹ Even given this array of material, the inferences I can make are confined to what is said, non-verbal noises, my own understanding of BBC interviews, talking to Tom and my own common-sense notions of what is going on.

The first version I heard of this interview was a finished product ready for the course. The edited interview is a highly polished affair. Its place in the course is to explore the difficulties and problems of people with dementia and their carers. The first activity in the course relating to the interview takes the following form:

Listen now to the first section of the audio cassette which features Mr and Mrs Graham who were interviewed by a member of the course team in their home in a working class district of a northern city.

You will hear them talking about some of their current difficulties and problems. This gives a limited picture of their lives, but at a first meeting with new clients or patients many professional workers will only gain a similarly limited picture.

As you listen, note your answers to the following questions:

- 1 What do you think are the main physical and mental health problems which seem to affect either Mr or Mrs Graham?
2. Which other problems and difficulties do they appear to have?

(P577, Mental Health Problems in Old Age: 1988)

I have quoted this activity in full to emphasise that the edited tape and the whole original recorded interview were made for a very specific purpose.²

¹ For the purposes of the final analysis I have used my own transcripts of the unedited interviews.

² Later activities in the course take up the issue of biography in relation to Mr and Mrs Graham and invite students to consider how threatening the environment is for the couple.

Given this purpose, Tom sought to stimulate talk on the part of Mr and Mrs Graham that would, in some way, provide the data required for the activity: or at least he would have looked for a general direction that the interview might take, in accord with the direction of the written material. He had a specific shopping list of things to talk about. To achieve the course's requirements he wanted both substantive information from the couple, but also to demonstrate the idiosyncrasies of Mr Graham's talk and self-presentation. He wanted Mr Graham mainly as a respondent, that is as someone who displayed talk that was of interest. For Tom's purposes, in being a respondent, Mr Graham needed to show he was confused, in order to illustrate for students some of the trials of that condition. Indeed, the rationale for his inclusion is that *he is to be heard as a confused person*. Just occasionally Mr Graham also acted as an informant, that is, offering information about confusion and his experience of it. But primarily Tom wanted Mrs Graham as an informant, to offer information about Mr Graham and his confusion.

From my talks with Tom and my own experience I can make some assumptions that help me further to understand what is going on. I can assume that there were other people present apart from Tom and the Grahams (at least the producer and possibly a sound recordist as well). I can speculate about non-verbal clues on the tape, for example that the off-microphone groanings are Mr Graham rather than the sound recordist or Tom: sound recordists and interviewers, as a general rule, do not groan at interviews (and, if they do, it is usually edited out!). I also know from my own experience that in sound recordings for the BBC interviewers are encouraged to nod their heads rather than to say 'yes' to interviewee, so that the editing will be easier to do. As Pearce (1973) suggests, in relation to broadcast interviews, the aim is for the interviewee to provide a monologue. Here the absence of verbal acknowledgement on the part of the interviewer can be seen to facilitate, for the audience, concerted slabs of one-person talk. I can also speculate that the lack of background noise is because clocks, and so on, have been removed from the room in advance. Furthermore, people have been instructed not to point at things but to spell them out. A BBC sound interview is calculated to remove as much deixis as possible. Such an interview is a highly formalised version of people talking to each other.

All these speculations are to do with my interpretation of the context in which the recording was made. However, while I may dismiss the small number of 'mmms' and 'yes' answers on the tape as due to a particular

situational constraint, rather than to the way normal speakers speak, either to each other or to confused speakers, it is more difficult to dismiss the groaning *even within such a tightly constrained situation*. The groaning, it seems to me, is an important aspect of this conversation. It is not something that can be edited out (even were this thought to be desirable) because it goes on in parallel with the rest of the conversation. As I noted in Chapter 1, Sacks et al. (1978) suggest that while overlap commonly occurs in conversation talk by more than one speaker at a time tends to be brief. Turn taking is a central supportive feature of this notion. The simultaneous occurrence of talk and groaning suggests that this conversation is not quite normal.

The ecology of the conversation is highly specialised. Just as deixis is controlled in the sense of lack of artefacts (no clock, no external noise), so temporal markers are highly formalised too. The interview schedule drives the encounter on. Tom's organisation of the talk is very much around questions ('I'd just like to ask you a question about', 'Can I ask your wife a few questions please?'). Temporality, in the sense of what will happen next, is frequently dealt with in terms of some allusion to the format or direction of future questions, or by reference to questions that have already been raised in the interview. Tom is clearly identified as being 'in charge':

Extract 1

Tom:	Mr Graham, can I ask you, how old you are Mr Graham?
Mr Graham:	Sssssss eighty six I think it is, isn't it Lily?
Mrs Graham:	Can I speak?
Tom:	Yes, sure
Mrs Graham:	He was born in 1899.

Tom speaks first, choosing the next speaker. Mrs Graham tells *Tom* the age of her husband rather than directing her answer to her husband (who had asked the most recent question about age). The answers are for Tom; Mrs Graham speaks for her husband, having sought permission to speak from Tom. This is a rather structured interview, then, carried out under circumstances having features that depart in various ways from those of everyday conversation.

Moyra's interview

While researching for her PhD, another colleague, Moyra Sidell, conducted a number of interviews with people suffering from confusion (Sidell: 1986). Although her main emphasis was on services for older confused people she decided to visit some of them to remind herself of the problems such a condition brought for their everyday lives. Moyra lent me a number of taped

interviews, some of which are only a few minutes long and some almost inaudible. However one interview – that with Tilly – was long, clearly audible, and immediately stood out as an interaction between a normal and a confused speaker. Moyra had already visited Tilly several times when she conducted this interview with her at her home, so the encounter formed part of a continuing relationship.

As I developed the transcript of Moyra's interview with Tilly it became apparent that the physical setting and the activity that accompanied the interview feature a good deal more prominently than in my own interviews or in Tom's. There are temporal markers in the encounter that are interview-oriented, but there are also temporal markers that are domestic. There is a lot of getting up to fetch things, mention of things 'over there', cups of tea and cakes. Ointment is fetched and discussed, rooms in the house are visited and talked about. Moyra, on the whole (apparently), remains stationary with her tape recorder, unless invited to move. Tilly's 'ownership' of the setting is evident. It does not seem surprising that Tilly has a reasonable hold on the conversation, since even given that her speech is confused her possessions can occasionally bear the burden of her side of the conversation. If a tin of ointment is produced as a non-verbal statement Moyra is obliged to remark on it, in effect to reply: and if it keeps on being produced Moyra has to keep on replying. The conversation is more locally managed than other data I have discussed so far. Indeed, the encounter is *moved on* by making tea, by domestic events, by Tilly's possessions which are present in the flat and produced by her for comment by Moyra. The 'ownership' of the physical setting by Tilly is a main platform of the conversation, and counterbalances Moyra's 'ownership' of the interview format. This contrasts with a more formal interview setting where the environment is either controlled by the interviewer or has been neutralised so as not to impinge on the talk, and where respondents have little they can 'own' except their own talk.

In the conversation between Moyra and Tilly there are a number of disputes. Tilly believes her sister Martha to be alive. She also believes that she is not currently in her own home (i.e. at the time when the interview is being taped). Moyra contradicts Tilly and tells her that her sister is dead and presents evidence to try to persuade her that she is in her own home. My hearing of the interview is somewhat like the situation described by Rawlings when she talks about her research involving recordings of therapists and patients talking together. Rawlings sums this up as 'Hear therapists talk as reliable but uninteresting, and hear patients' talk as

unreliable but interesting' (Rawlings 1988: 174). The patients' statements are to be seen as evidence of their problems, while the therapists' statements can be seen as evidence of their seriousness and legitimacy. Just as Rawlings contextualises what she knows of therapists and patients to give her the local knowledge to interpret what is being said, so in my hearing of the tape I found myself I contextualising what I know of Moyra and treating her as the person who has the reliable opinions in this conversation; even though it is not her house or her sister about whom they are talking. Moreover, this contextualisation of the interview reinforces the view that whatever Tilly says can be interpreted as yet more evidence of 'her problem' and her unreliability.

Recordings of domestic interaction

The final batch of data is very different in character from the others. At one of my early interviews at the psycho-geriatric clinic I met Mr Bruner, whose wife had dementia. He remarked that he had often thought of taping his wife at home and when I said that I would be interested in such a tape he offered to record 'the interesting bits' for me. I did, however, ask him if he would use the tapes to record some quite lengthy uninterrupted stretches of talk. I sent him some audio tapes through the post and he recorded two C90 tapes for me. This provided me with access to some talk that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain, and again increased the number of contexts I was able to examine in this study. Even though Mr Bruner had offered to tape this material for me, I explained what I was doing and asked permission from the couple to use the tapes. Mrs Bruner appeared to have no interest in this request and the permission was negotiated with Mr Bruner. However, during the recordings themselves Mrs Bruner is not always oblivious to the tape recorder. On a number of occasions she asks why Mr Bruner is setting it up, and each time he uses some (possibly) obfuscating answer, for example 'So I'll be able to hear you', or 'To play you some music'. However these responses seem to satisfy her and she then appears to have no further interest in the recorder.

My lack of contextual knowledge is even more pronounced with the Bruner tapes than it is with the recordings made by Tom and Moyra. Given that I was not present and that some of these recordings are focused on activity which is not primarily verbal, I can only infer what went on. Mr Bruner appears to have decided to switch on the tape recorder mainly during periods of daily household routines: getting up, housework, having lunch,

going to bed and so on. As a result there is a high level of deixis, particularly during episodes when Mrs Bruner is being dressed or put to bed.

There are some quite long stretches of un-interrupted recorded talk in this collection of data, often when Mr Bruner leaves the tape recorder on when he is doing something out of the room.³ Geographic proximity (or not) of the couple seems to be extremely important to Mrs Bruner, and the ecology of the conversation is salient for an analysis of their talk. The other episodes on the tapes appear to constitute episodes that Mr Bruner regards as 'interesting'. And some of the 'interesting' episodes are very brief; noises on the recording indicate when he has stopped and started the tape and sometimes there is only a minute's talk before there is the characteristic bang of the tape recorder being switched off.⁴

So what I have here are some selected episodes of talk taking place in a domestic setting between people who know each other well, one of whom apparently is not cognisant of the purpose of the exercise. There appears to be no attempt on Mr Bruner's part to orchestrate the encounters for the recording in the way that he actually talks to his wife. His talk can be seen to be limited to that which is appropriate for mundane domestic occasions, with the imposed constraint of talking to someone whose practical reasoning abilities seem to be limited.

Comparing the situations

In all the situations in which my data have been collected, the relationships between talk, activity and setting are an important issue, in terms of beginning to get a point of view on the conversations. For example, in the clinic where I conducted my interviews the setting encourages a particular sort of interview format. While I had anticipated fairly casual conversations, the context suggested 'medical interview' as an overarching available category of organisation for those involved. The situation was more complicated in the case of Tom's interview. We might expect that a

³ Indeed, it is interesting that Mr Bruner's choice of material to record includes a substantial amount of talk which takes place when the two people are not co-present, a selection that in common-sense terms seems likely to focus more on purposeful 'get something done' conversations rather than casual chat. People chatting tend to be physically co-present as well as interactionally engaged (except when on the telephone).

⁴ There are a number of abrupt high pitched starts to some of the talk, not all of which appear to correspond with Mr Bruner switching it on for 'an interesting bit' (i.e. during a lunchtime sequence when the couple appear to be together). This led me to wonder whether the tape recorder was voice activated.

conversation at home would be informal, perhaps involving the interviewee getting up, moving around and doing things. However, we find that the interview in the Graham home does not conform to this expectation. The conversation is guided and managed, and could be seen to have the explicit intent of making it understandable to people listening to an educational tape for the first time, as well as being orchestrated by the technical concerns of the BBC. By contrast, Moyra's interview with Tilly is closely related to physical activity. Although the encounter is recognisably an interview, the temporal and geographical markers demonstrate it to be a domestic and social event too, an event upon which Tilly puts her own mark. Moyra's interviews are confirmatory of other strands of her work: she can allow events to unfold, she does not have to pursue a particular theme. Finally, Mr Bruner's task is to 'tell it how it is': his intention is to produce an interesting tape for me as a researcher. 'Important' and 'interesting' are terms he uses to embrace both himself and myself as members of the same group of people (people who will see this talk as significant). Although this recordings are not selective in the sense that an interview format controls the talk, they are examples of types of talk that Mr Bruner sees as relevant to my research.

Types of talk

One of the most important points to arise from discussion of the literature in Chapter 1 was that the identification of talk as confused, and the features which make it confused, are context-dependent. Given the variation in the character of the contexts from which my data come, this means that careful attention needs to be given to the relationships between settings and types of talk.

In the case of my interviews, the people entering the ante-room to meet me could reasonably have expected to be required to engage in an interview. And interviews do have certain essential characteristics which, as I shall suggest, may be part of an ordinary member's stock of knowledge:

- interviews have a specific start point when business gets under way ('If I can just begin with');
- the interviewer must have a reason for the interview (whether to gather information, select personnel, provide entertainment, etc.) although the interviewee may not always know what this is, or may be mistaken about it. According to purpose, therefore, interviewees can be deemed to have failed if they have not been appropriately informative, been

appointed, been entertaining, etc. And, generally speaking, it is the interviewer who defines the success or otherwise of the occasion;⁵

- topics are likely to be pre-allocated by the interviewer, based on the purpose of the interview;
- there is pre-allocation of the right to ask questions on the part of the interviewer, and of the obligation to answer questions on the part of the interviewee;
- a record of some kind is usually generated (whether by television cameras, written evidence such as a curriculum vitae, audio tapes, etc.), usually for the interviewer's benefit;
- the interviewer generally initiates the interaction;
- there is some concluding point after which the interview can be deemed to have finished.

However, to list essential features of interviews does little in the way of clarifying the nature of the contexts involved. While members' common-sense knowledge and experience may encompass a large repertoire of possible occasions, it does not cover all the potential combinations of setting, personnel and talk. Such an understanding is something which proceeds on a step-by-step, 'wait and see' basis as the occasion unfolds. There is no determinate relationship between physical setting, institutional context and particular forms of talk. People have to work out what is appropriate behaviour on any occasion; and do this on the basis of their member's knowledge of the different types of occasion along with the forms of talk and participant roles associated with them. Moreover, contexts can be constructed and reconstructed in the course of an occasion.

One consequence of this is that instantiations of particular contexts are not always straightforward: they may have more of the character of mixed cases. In other words there may be some ambiguity or uncertainty about the nature of the context on the part of those involved in it. There are, for example, very many different types of interviews with which people may be familiar, such as medical interviews, survey research interviews, media interviews, employment interviews and so on. Moreover, within each, there are different interviewing strategies. Yet, although the interviewee may only have a slight sense of these complexities, he or she must make sense of what

⁵ As Tolson (1991) notes, Dame Edna Everage has an eject button to dispose of boring guests!

sort of interview context they are in. And of course, in doing this to one degree or another they also *determine* what sort of interview context it is. In my interviews people may have expected to face another medical interview, given the institutional location and the fact that the consultant acted as a gatekeeper. At the same time, the consultant's introduction may have suggested a research interview. And some people may have had experience of such interviews in the past, along with a range of other types of interview which they may draw on, consciously or unconsciously.

Some expectations of an occasion may not quite fit with what the interviewer is seeking. For example, ethnographers have noted that elite groups such as politicians may do only 'one sort of interview', partly because of issues of secrecy but also because their concern is to express their ideas for consumption by potential voters (Dexter: 1970). Briggs has noted a number of possible dissonances between interviewer and interviewee: such as the refusal of the interviewee to take a subordinate role, and the problem of invalid presuppositions on the part of the interviewer (Briggs: 1986). All of these mis-alignments of expectations can lead to the purpose of the interview as required by the interviewer being subverted.

It is worth exploring some of the ways in which different types of interview vary, since this can give some sense of the resources upon which participants in my interviews (and those in Tom's and Moyra's interviews) might have drawn. Interview talk can be seen as a methodic practice but a practice which is adjustable depending on the nature of the interview (Silverman: 1973).

Interviews

Interviews are a very commonly available form of event and many people have experience of taking part in them. Moreover, the people I talked to had already been through an interview procedure with the consultant psycho-geriatrician (even in the unlikely event of never having had any other medical interview). Most people, too, have seen media interviews: national television and radio news interviews; chat show interviews, the products of newspapers and magazine interviews. The interview, then, is a readily available category of activity that members can employ to understand interactional situations and guide their own behaviour in them. It is a recognisable interactional format even if people are not fully cognisant with its purpose: just as being requested to tell someone the time is a recognisable interactional format even if one is not aware of why someone wants to know.

However, while there may be common features in all interviews, there is some variation in format. Moreover, different participants may orient to different formats. First, I look at a type of interview that I, myself, drew on as a resource for the interaction – the loosely structured ethnographic interview.

The ethnographic interview

Ethnographic interviews are generally much less structured by the researcher than other kinds of research interview. Open-ended questions tend to be used, and rather than following a pre-specified set of questions, the interviewer asks questions that follow up relevant issues mentioned by the informant in previous responses. Of course, the ethnographer will usually have an agenda of topics he or she wants to find out about but will endeavour to encourage the interviewee to introduce and develop topics as well. Burgess (1988) describes ethnographic interviews as *conversations with a purpose*, indicating that they draw on the resources of ordinary conversation for their conduct. While such interviews are not ordinary conversations, those taking part have resources to be able to do *both* conversation *and* interviews and to be aware that in this situation it is permissible to do both.

In such interviews researchers are concerned with generating significant analytical categories as they go along, rather than starting out with pre-defined categories:

The qualitative goal [...] is often to isolate and define categories during the process of research. The qualitative investigator expects the nature and definition of analytic categories to change in the course of the project.

(McCracken 1988: 16)

McCracken goes on to suggest that 'For one field [survey research], well defined categories are the means of research, for another they are the object of research' (McCracken 1986: 16). This has implications for the conversational repertoire that ethnographic interviewers use:

Ethnographers do not decide beforehand the questions they want to ask, though they may enter the interview with a list of issues to be covered. Nor do ethnographers restrict themselves to a single mode of questioning. On different occasions, or at different points in the same interview, the approach may be non-directive or directive, depending on the function that the questioning is intended to serve.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 113)

So, as researchers locate significant categories they may need different conversational tools to pursue these. However, while they may want to set up an occasion to elicit information relevant to their research, they also want the situation to be natural, and what they assume this means is that talk

approximates in some ways to an ordinary conversation. For example, as with all interviews, questioning is a major format borrowed from ordinary conversation. However, on the whole, in ethnographic interviews a particular type of questioning is found. Many sociological textbooks of the seventies and eighties advise against the use of questions which can only be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. They suggest that to ask such questions encourages confirmations or disavowals as proper responses. The occasion of loosely structured interviews, particularly in qualitative research, is one which requires the interviewee to *talk*: the aim is to get informants to talk in their own terms about some topic and not just respond monosyllabically. Consequently, questions which require fulsome answers are recommended.

While this type of interview parallels ordinary conversation in not pre-allocating topics, it relies on the interview format, leading to question/answer sequences, with the interviewer as questioner and the questions designed to elicit extended talk on the part of the interviewee. None of the literature suggests that the interviewer says 'you are supposed to talk for longer than I am and be relevant and interesting to me' but this is an implicit imperative and makes it rather a one-sided conversation. Moreover, the interviewer needs to produce the kinds of questions that will stimulate *the sorts* of answers that he or she wants and has a series of criteria by which to judge the success of the interview. The interviewer's role is not that of a co-conversationalist. What actually happens is that the methods chosen ape a sort of idealised view of ordinary conversation by imitating question types that generally get certain sorts of responses in such conversation. Thus, a string of 'yes' or 'no' answers from the interviewee may be seen to result in a failed interview, where the performance of the interviewee can be categorised as unhelpful and that of the interviewer as incompetent. Interestingly, 'failure' of such interviews has been explored only from the interviewer's point of view and then in terms of remedial action – rarely from the point of view of what is being accomplished by the interviewee.

The above interpretation of criteria of good interviewing suggests that underlying explicit instructions about methods of interviewing mundane ordinary member assumptions are taken for granted. Some are manifested literally in instructions about what sort of person to be:

For most interviewing situations it is most productive of information and for the interviewer to assume a non-argumentative, supportive and sympathetically understanding attitude.

(Lofland, cited in Mishler 1986: 29-30)

Lofland's quotation implies aspects of self that should be withheld i.e. those which are contentious. Underpinning this is an idea that people who are sympathetically understanding get more out of others than confrontational people. However this is to map out a persona for the interviewer which is not automatically to be found in all individuals; not everyone is sympathetically understanding in their social lives, just as not everyone warms to being treated 'sympathetically'. Moreover, some people are very successful at getting others to talk by dominating them. Approaches such as that described by Lofland illustrate methods as containing instructions about how to talk and who to be – both indicators of the operation of pre-allocation in talk, looking to an outcome not generally anticipated in ordinary conversation. However, because interviewees are alerted to the fact that this is not a completely normal conversation they can choose to acknowledge the implicit agenda or to be 'irrelevant' when the agenda does not fit with what they want to say. Thus we might suggest that 'failure' in an ethnographic interview can occur where the interviewee operates stronger 'local management' of the talk than the interviewer operates 'pre-allocated management'.

The case of my own interviews is a good illustration of the complexities surrounding the concept of context and appropriate types of talk for a given occasion. While I would say that these interviews approximate to a loosely structured ethnographic pattern this is not an unproblematic categorisation. I wanted to engage in conversation primarily for the purpose of collecting samples of confused talk. Hence, there was little or no need for any guidance on my part – in a sense 'anything would do'. This meant that, were it possible, a casual conversation would do as well as an interview. Indeed, I felt that this would have been the ideal. However, even at my first interview it became apparent to me that I could not be a casual participant. Partly as a result of my performance, and partly because of the context, I was very much cast in the role of interviewer. My contacts with confused speakers and carers were occasioned as interviews, in meetings that were officially set up: they were not occasioned as casual chance encounters between strangers where a conversation might arise. The conclusion that the occasions were interviews was reinforced for me as I listened to the tapes when I became aware that I was hearing 'interviewer', 'interviewee' rather than 'casual participants'.

In fact, what happened was that I adopted an approach in which the questions were designed, primarily, to stimulate the confused speaker to talk about matters of interest to them in their own terms. Since I behaved like an

interviewer and was treated as an interviewer this had implications for the roles of the other participants. It introduced an additional element of ambiguity. An example of this can be seen in the life history questions I asked when talk proper began (after introductions and so on). Life history questions are an opening gambit in a wide range of conversational situations, both formal and informal, when people meet for the first time (at interviews, at parties, on trains etc.). However, I was talking in a setting with people who had just emerged from a series of encounters where the nature of the talk was pre-allocated and where the temporal and geographical markers were there to be interpreted institutionally. And they had also come to the anteroom specifically for an interview with me. Moreover, all of my questions took a 'life history' form so that it could well have appeared to participants that the 'interviews' never properly got started.

The key questions for the participants, presumably, was 'what sort of occasion is this and what role should I play?' Although I was myself oriented towards something that might be described as an ethnographic interview this was not an absolute constraint on the proceedings. Indeed, I would suggest that, in fact, it is fairly unlikely that an 'ethnographic interview' would be a guiding format available to participants arriving at an interview with me. There were a number of other more widely available forms of talk which probably shaped how people saw the context, their own role and my behaviour. I will begin with the most obvious one: the medical interview.

Medical interviews

Unlike some interviews, the interviewer's participation in the medical interview is often initially at the instigation of the patient (although after the initial consultation the doctor may control the frequency and timing of future interviews). In common with other interviews, it has specified start and end points, usually orchestrated by the doctor. It involves a specialised environment, often an institutional one (but even if taking place in a patient's home may require a specialisation of the environment: privacy, washing facilities and so on).

Such interviews constitute talk as social action, since they are part of the process of diagnosis. In talk the doctor asks most of the questions and can judge certain answers, questions and comments by patients to be irrelevant. In addition, a record of the medical interview is made, but only according to

what the doctor deems relevant; and traditionally that record is for professional purposes, and not for patients.⁶

The literature on medical interviews (particularly within the medical profession itself) has traditionally ignored their interactive and social constructional nature:

Physicians are viewed as collectors and analyzers of technical information elicited from patients. A patient is, ideally, a passive object responding to the stimuli of a physician's queries.

(Mishler 1984: 10)

This contrasts with the ethnographic interview where, ideally, the stimuli are distributed via both interviewer and interviewee, and a passive interviewee renders the interview a failure. In the 1970s and 1980s a substantial amount of sociological work was conducted on the medical interview – on how a diagnosis is constructed and how accounts are developed within that context (Strong: 1979, Mishler: 1984, Cicourel: 1987, Silverman: 1987, Sharrock and Anderson: 1987, Fisher and Groce: 1990). Within the corpus of work that was developed it was suggested that there were some variations in the structure of the medical interview. For example, Stimson and Webb (1975) emphasised the involvement and relative control of the patient, and Strong (1979) noted a variety of different medical interview formats.

Building on the work of Silverman and Torode, Mishler has suggested that there are different 'voices' in the medical interview: the medical voice and the patient's 'lifeworld voice':

[...] a "voice" represents a specific normative order. Some discourses are closed and continually reaffirm a single normative order; others are open and include different voices, one of which may interrupt another, thus leading to the possibility of a new "order" [...] Disruptions of the discourse during [medical] interviews appear to mark instances where the "voice of the lifeworld" interrupts the dominant "voice of medicine."

(Mishler 1984: 63)

This interpretation of medical interviews leads us to look at the notion of what a valid topic of discussion is. For the patient to provide new topics is not generally valid in the medical interview; although he or she is, at points, expected to give accounts. However, unless these accounts are deemed 'valid' by the doctor it is likely that the latter will begin to ask questions that orient them in a more 'appropriate' direction he or she deems fit, or move to bring them to a close. Mishler notes:

⁶ The 1991 Access to Health Records Act has, of course, increased patient access to records.

[...] responses are not simply answers to questions but also a reflection of the interviewer's assessment of whether a respondent has said "enough" for the purpose at hand.

(Mishler 1986: 55)

The important point here is that it is the doctor's 'purpose at hand' which is paramount. In the same discussion Mishler (1986: 54-55) notes that doctors often encourage short responses and leave insufficient pause to allow the patient to become discursive. The accomplishment of being a patient lies in knowing how much to offer when.

At other times (often as the doctor is closing down/coming to the diagnosis) the patient is largely restricted to acknowledging what the doctor has said and can be seen to be in a situation which is controlled by the interviewer. Of course, these discursive conventions do not entirely control patient behaviour. However, it is instructive that patients often ask questions or raise topics as they leave (after the interview has ended). This suggests that they may have read the situation in the interview as providing no valid openings for what concerned them. Asking such questions on the threshold of the room gives them an ambiguous status between the two worlds, offering the doctor the opportunity to hear the question as a 'lifeworld' question or as a medical question.⁷ This points to a sophisticated understanding on the part of patients about how openings and closings relate to the structure of the interview and an equally sophisticated strategy for preserving face.

Within some medical interviews there are occasions when the lifeworld view of the patient is encouraged by the physician as the dominant voice. One of these is when the professional wants to see how the client is performing in terms of communication (i.e. stroke or concussion victims, suspected cases of depression, putative schizophrenics). Here, people are frequently asked questions about the taken-for-granted nature of the world in order to confirm that they have the usual lifeworld knowledge. Of course, there is a paradox: to ask about taken-for-granted aspects of the world potentially marks the situation out as one where some accounting needs doing. As the doctor floats his or her hand in front of the patient and asks 'How many fingers have I got?', those who are not too distressed might feel inclined to ask 'Is this a trick question?' Usually, in medical situations, the interviewer has no obligation to say why she is asking questions about the

⁷ The image of the threshold has been used in social anthropology in discussions of rites in which a person passes from one status to another, and fits quite aptly here too.

taken-for-granted world. Thus, Fisher and Groce (1990: 236) describe a fairly common medical pattern that does not require doctors to give complete accounts. For example, they may offer an apology for hurting the patient in an examination but no explanation as to why they are doing the examination. There is also often a certain suspension of the expectation that the patient will understand. Breaches of common understanding may be tolerated up to a certain point, on the assumption that the doctor has some esoteric knowledge that the patient cannot expect to understand. Overall, whatever the 'voice' used, the goal for the doctor is to categorise the interviewee in terms of medical discourse, and the dominance of this discourse is routinely assumed by the doctor (and by many patients) from the outset.

Survey research interviews

Given that I was introduced as a researcher, another sort of interview that may have informed participants' orientations is the survey interview. Most people have had experience of market research or other survey research interviews at some time.

Survey research often uses a highly structured question schedule in interviews which are standardised: that is to say, the questions are written in advance and trained interviewers administer them in a way which attempts to be comparable across interviews. The emphasis is on achieving an identical procedure for each interview so that no individual response is distorted by extraneous factors. If respondents cannot understand questions, or have some other query, the interviewer usually has a series of standardised prompts she can use to amplify the question. The methodological literature suggests that the interviewer's role should be specific and non-judgmental, thus avoiding a whole tranche of interactions that people might expect in the course of ordinary conversations:

Many situations merit the description 'interview', but we can in the present context confine ourselves to that in which the interviewer is neither trying to help the informant nor to educate him, neither to gauge his suitability for a job nor to get his expert opinion: the situation where she [...] is simply seeking information from, and probably about, him and where he is likely to be one of many from whom similar information is sought.

(Moser and Kalton 1971: 270)

Similarly, questions are developed to anticipate and avoid all the pitfalls that characterise ordinary conversation. Ambiguous and multiple questions are to be avoided, for example, as are words with different meanings that sound the same:

[..] words so opposite in meaning as these two might be confused:

- Do you favor or oppose a law outlawing guns in the state of Maryland?
- Do you favor or oppose a law allowing guns in the state of Maryland?

(Converse and Presser 1986: 14)

The implication is that the risk of mishearing can be obviated by using phonically dissimilar words. Converse and Presser suggest, then, that questionnaire writers should be clear and avoid formulations that might confuse or mislead the respondent. For example, the authors also recommend the avoidance of double negatives, implicit negatives, over-long lists, dangling alternatives and so on (Converse and Presser 1986: 13-15). An ordinary conversation provides all sorts of opportunities for such constructions and thus for participants to misunderstand each other. But, since such conversation is jointly constructed, participants can work together to understand what is being said, using self-correction, other-correction and preventative work to remedy any problems. This relies on continual reading of the conversation 'at this point in time': so that both retrospective and prospective interpretive work is going on. Indeed, the remedial work in ordinary conversation is both context-shaped and context-renewing. By contrast such work would be seen as undesirable in survey research interviews where roles need to stay the same and where local management must not take over.

The format of the survey interview and the methodological literature surrounding it effectively create a blueprint for how to go about such interviews. However underlying the 'method proper' there are methodic practices which are taken for granted, for example:

- the interviewer's topic choice is determined in advance by the question schedule;
- the interviewer's turn size is predetermined in advance by the question schedule;
- the interviewer may not be the person who has constructed the questions;
- any attempts to locally manage the conversation by the respondent are responded to only by pre-determined utterances, the interviewee's participation is highly constrained;
- the feedback the interviewer is able to give is limited to non-judgmental phrases like 'thank you';

- there is usually an 'any other' category which accommodates 'oddities' that cannot be taken into account within the interview format;
- even misunderstanding and breakdown of the conversation can be accommodated by the coding 'don't know', which can cover both a negative answer to a question and a refusal to co-operate.

In a sense, the survey research interview can be seen to attempt to take care of the huge array of instructions Heritage speaks of in his discussion of normative views of rules: an attempt to exhaustively cover all the possible contingencies in the interview.

Whilst a normative structure [...] is imaginable for a simple greetings situation, it requires little insight to see that given the enormous complexity of talk and interaction and the endless variability of the circumstances in which they occur, the normative theorist is inexorably drawn into equipping the actor with a huge array of instructions – enough, in fact, to deal with every empirically possible contingency in social life. While such a proposal may be unconvincing, still less convincing is the notion that the entire population is uniformly equipped with such instructions such that each member is capable of commonly identifying, without error, every circumstantial nuance requiring a change of conduct.

(Heritage 1984: 113-114)

In the survey interview one party to the transaction (the interviewer) offers all instructions to the other party (the interviewee) and every circumstantial nuance should be accounted for through the standardised questions and prompts. As Mishler (1986: 11) notes, the survey research interview is seen in stimulus-response terms and as behaviour; problems are treated as 'technical', to be solved through precise methods. The context of the interview and the inferences to be drawn from interactional work involved are rarely acknowledged. Suchman and Jordan, in their work on survey research methodology, suggest that compared with ordinary conversations, 'the survey interview suppresses those interactional resources that routinely mediate uncertainties of relevance and interpretation' (1990: 232). Among other examples they note that the format of questions and their pursuit by the interviewer can 'escalate routine troubles' into troubles which are expressed in the form the interviewer is interested in (p. 236). By this they mean that the interviewee's attempts to fit into criteria offered (these often being elaborated by the interviewer with a series of increasingly detailed qualifications to the original question) may lead him or her to cast around to elaborate answers that might have remained focused on the mundane in an ordinary conversation. In other words, it is difficult for a respondent to resist the framing offered in a survey interview whether it is relevant in their terms or not. Suchman and Jordan also comment that it is difficult for the interviewer

'to listen' for misunderstandings in any way other than by the use of prepared prompts, whereas in ordinary conversation 'Successful communication is not so much a product of avoidance of the misunderstandings as of their successful detection and repair' (p. 238).

In relation to my interviews, confused speakers and their carers who considered the possibility that this might be a survey interview would have looked to my responses and verbal interaction for 'instructions' about how to respond and, indeed, what to respond. They would, however, have received little guidance from these.

Media interviews

I want briefly to mention media interviews since these are perhaps the type of interview people encounter most frequently, through watching the television, listening to the radio and reading the newspapers.⁸ In media interviews interviewees are there for some purpose related either to their enduring fame, an event of moment they have been involved in or have witnessed, or their expertise. There are special features about them, or about their lives, that are the point of the interview as far as the interviewer is concerned. Those who are being interviewed are generally aware of the reason for the interview and know that only certain accounts are valid on their part. Atkinson has noted that for a celebrity to fill the interviewer in on the details of his famous life as though he were an ordinary person can only be seen as coy by those listening (Atkinson: 1973). Similarly an interviewer is expected to know what is not appropriate, such as asking famous persons like Elizabeth Taylor what they do for a living. For different reasons, experts are rarely asked to establish their credentials. In most media interviews there simply is not time for this, so it has to be done by announcement. Merely to have been chosen for an interview can authenticate an expert. However, having been chosen, experts are supposed to disseminate their knowledge both wisely and simply enough for the average person to understand it, taking the context into account. And these tasks relate both to the purpose of the interview and to the projected audience for it.⁹

⁸ Mr and Mrs Hoy, whom I interviewed, had themselves been involved in a television programme about Alzheimer's Disease, which may have provided Mr Hoy (the carer) with a possible resource for dealing with other interviews relating to the dementing illness from which Mrs Hoy suffered.

⁹ It is interesting how experts coped with explaining the derivatives market in the wake of the Barings Bank fiasco in 1995. Their wholly unsuccessful attempts reflect Lynch and Bogen's comments on the problems of addressing explanations to 'anyone' (Lynch and Bogen 1994: 85).

The boundaries of valid topics can be points of contention in media interviews, and interviewees may refuse to answer certain questions: such disagreements often centre on whether an issue should be discussed generally or a specific case cited.¹⁰ In some types of media interviews the interviewer appears to have licence to press more firmly, for example in political interviews which often tend to be adversarial, while in others such as chat show interviews the interviewer is not expected to press an interviewee (except on special occasions such as the interviews with the film star Hugh Grant after his arrest for 'lewd conduct in a public place' in 1995).

In watching such interviews people may see that there are all sorts of rules of conduct which relate to the status of the interviewer (i.e. neutrality, see Clayman: 1988), the subject of the discussion, what can be said and what should be left unsaid, the status and style of the interviewee and so on. They may also come to see that the purpose of the interview both gives the interviewer licence to ask things that might not be referred to in ordinary conversation with strangers, but also gives the interviewee licence to respond in kind. However, media interviews are also organised and edited for an audience, a circumstance which does not generally apply to other types of interviews (although a medical consultant may conduct an interview in front of students). Pearce (1973) notes that some issues arising in broadcast interviews relate to editing requirements, such as the required length of the interview, whether the interview is going to be broadcast as a discrete entity (for example, Face-to Face) or whether it will be excerpted in a news programme (for example, the Nine O'clock News) and so on. He also notes that the modification of interviews by the editing process may present a final product that is a more coherent account than a live interview. All of these factors may facilitate an impression of a requirement for 'polish' and sophistication as a model for an interview.

My interviewees, and similarly those of Tom and Moyra, may have been guided in their orientation to their meeting with me by these various common-sense models of the interview. However, as I have stressed, my aim was to approximate a casual conversation, and even though I was forced to present this in the form of an ethnographic interview, the concept of

¹⁰ In a radio interview I listened to recently about a social services scandal the interviewer was pursuing the case of a man with learning disabilities who had been sexually abused and the interviewee responded at least five times by saying 'I can't speak for individual cases but I can say this about our policy'.

conversation seems likely to have played a role in the behaviour of the confused speakers and their carers (as, indeed, it did for me). Moreover, as I pointed out earlier, some of my data comes from a domestic situation and is very much in conversational mode. So one common issue to consider in the data is how they relate to models of conversation.

Conversations

As I have noted, there is some agreement among conversation analysts that ordinary conversation can be seen as a base line, with other types of talk as licensed deviations from it. Heritage (1984: 241) suggests that all social interaction shows organised patterns of 'stable, identifiable structural features'. Such features are social in character and independent of personality or other individual characteristics:

Knowledge of these organizations is a major part of the competence which ordinary speakers bring to their communicative activities and, whether consciously or unconsciously, this knowledge influences their conduct and their interpretation of the conduct of others. Ordinary interaction can thus be analysed so as to exhibit stable organizational patterns of action to which the participants are oriented.

(Heritage 1984: 241)

Nofsinger (1991: 3-4), in a summation of research in the field, suggests that three characteristics are seen by many authors to be significant features of conversation. It is:

- **interactive:** two (or more) people take part, and it exists in real time on a turn by turn basis;
- **locally managed:** during the course of interaction the people involved decide who speaks, when and for how long;
- **mundane:** it is commonplace and practical.

To this Heritage (1984: 242-243) would add two other features:

- **conversation is both context-shaped and context-renewing:** what people say cannot be understood except by reference to the context, including the context of the immediately preceding remark; but what they say also creates the context for the next part of the conversation, and so on;
- **that nothing in the conversation can be dismissed as insignificant as a matter of course.**

Levinson (1983) sees conversation as having a detailed and elaborate structure of which people are not aware and defines it as follows:

[...] conversation may be taken to be that familiar predominant kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking, which generally occurs outside specific institutional settings like religious services, law courts, classrooms and the like.

(Levinson 1983: 284)

Conversation as the 'basic model' for other types of talk can also be seen to involve participants in roughly equal interactional rights. Conversation is organised 'more flexibly [than more specialised forms of talk], enabling more universalistic 'rights' to participate' (Lynch and Bogen 1994: 79).

Specialised ordinary talk and chat

Even if conversation stands as a base line for other types of talk, within ordinary conversation itself there are more specialised versions of talk and people routinely recognise all talk as being of some 'type'. Cheepen (1988), for example, attempts to pin down some characteristics of what she calls 'chat'. She sees a chat as having four elements :

- an introduction – at the beginning and ritualised in form;
- speech-in-action – seen as functional comments like 'Mind that might be a bit hot', or environmental comments 'I see you've got a new hi-fi'. In speech-in-action participants articulate what aspects of context can and should be attended to in the conversation;
- a story – a sequence of utterances which come in the basic format state-event-state, and involve specifying who the participants are, temporal location and evaluation: the story may be told by one person or jointly achieved.
- a closing – coming at the end, and again formulaic.

She notes that speech-in-action is often turned into a story with the co-operation of both speakers; that stories take up the greatest time in the conversation; that speech-in-action can primarily be seen to link stories; and that stories may not necessarily be news. She also suggests that although an introduction may not always be necessary, it appears that there always has to be a closing (Cheepen 1988: 82).

Ordinary chat can be seen to be interruptable, low status talk; it is a mode of talk which is considered non-serious and non-threatening. (although, of course, it can always turn into something else). Tolson (1991: 180) notes the orientation of chat to the personal and private rather than the institutional and public. When people are interrupted in a chat they may well say 'We were just having a chat', an utterance which both acts as a closing

and implies that it can be put on hold for some other form of talk.¹¹ Ordinary chat is deemed to be possible anywhere as long as the context does not indicate a requirement for some other kind of behaviour (as in the case of the idle chat in the classroom) and as long as participants are agreeable to this form of talk (and there are occasions where one participant may want a chat and another does not, as in lifts, on trains and so on).

Chat can be modified by pre-allocation of topics or, on occasion, by a pre-allocation of interactional rights or choice of suitable context. Even within casual informal talk participants may signpost special sorts of talk that is not just chat: as when people with a close relationship in difficulties might say one to the other 'we need to talk about this', thereby indicating the seriousness of the situation. Indeed, it can be seen that when *a type* of talk is named at the start of an interaction (or prior to it) that it is being given a designation of specialised conversation even if there is no institutional context. 'We'll discuss this later' indicates the requirement for a more suitable (specialised) environment than the current one for the proposed talk.

Research work on children indicates that modifications take place both in ordinary and institutional conversation when some participants have fewer interactional rights (Speier: 1969). Indeed, Strong (1979: 195-196) notes the ways in which children are routinely excluded from the main talk in clinic consultations where they are patients, and Watson comments on this more broadly in relation to adult-child interaction:

[...] ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts see 'adulthood' and 'childhood' not so much as straightforward substantive phenomena but in terms of arrays of procedural conventions which are oriented to by interactants and which furnish resources in the interaction – conventions which, indeed, assume and reproduce asymmetries between adults and children.

(Watson 1992: 12)

Role can be taken initially to be a procedural convention relating to how we might behave in certain situations. However, because every encounter presents a unique configuration of circumstances, aims and contingencies, we need always to formulate a role we think appropriate, in the light of what is going on. Accepting the role of child means formulating a performance that acknowledges the interactional rights of others: it is part of the interactional work that children do. Yet, depending on the degree of asymmetry they perceive, children may take more or fewer interactional rights (perhaps more

¹¹ Turner notes the use of 'just' as playing down the importance of the conversation to others (Turner 1972: 376).

with parents and fewer with adults whom they do not know). Limitation on interactional rights can be seen to operate, too, in other forms of specialised conversation, for example with older people or disabled people where normal speakers may speak on their behalf. All this is to demonstrate that even within the notion of ordinary conversation there is some variation. Indeed, within any conversation there are ways of shifting the context so that it can move into a different mode ('To be serious for a moment', 'Well, enough of that').

I have noted during the course of this chapter that several interactional formats may be available to participants in what are ostensibly interviews. Even when people are orienting to a particular *role format*, which Strong (1979) refers to as the whole ceremonial order of the situation, they sometimes suspend the rules and lapse into other identities that might normally be expected to be latent, given the situation and the current role format. Potter and Wetherell note:

Because people go through life faced with an ever-changing kaleidoscope of situations, they will need to draw upon very different repertoires to suit the needs at hand.

(Potter and Wetherell 1987: 156)

We might also add that, even within a role format as apparently occasioned as an interview, participants may discern a shifting situation and therefore call upon different roles and repertoires at different points in the interaction. One aspect of this is the occurrence of what I will call para-chat.

Para-chat

Even in formal settings and interviews, ordinary conversation may be initiated at various points when a range of devices from the ordinary conversational repertoire is used, for example, inconsequential topics of conversation, remarks about the weather, biography, physical setting and so on. Para-chat can take place both in sociological interviews and in such settings as medical interviews, and indeed in less serious formal situations. Tolson, in a discussion of broadcast chat in television quiz shows, suggests that it 'introduces a suspension within the "main" discourse, whilst a "subsidiary" discourse (an aside, a metadiscursive comment) is briefly formulated [...]' (Tolson 1991: 179). It is interesting in the light of this that in certain quiz shows, such as the television show 'Have I got news for you' (and the radio show 'The news quiz') the reverse is true: the formal business of question and answer serves merely as a platform for extended and witty chat. This is pointed up by the fact that the scores of the participants are

largely irrelevant, a situation most unlike the 'Brain of Britain' quiz. This may, perhaps, be explained by the fact that the participants in 'Have I got news for you' are effectively professional entertainers and that their 'chat' is their professional talk. In most professional settings, however, the availability of chat as a type of talk is constrained and not appropriate to most of the occasion. It may be seen as a form of talk which lies both at and within the boundaries of an occasioned event: it has to be strictly delimited or the professional may not be seen as taking his or her role seriously and the occasion of the interview may be undermined. Nevertheless the use of chat by the professional indicates that a discourse other than the professional discourse can be used, constituting a controlled handling of lifeworld discourse.

Some distinguishing features of para-chat are as follows. It is talk which acts as a boundary marker: it can take place at the beginning or end of specialised talk and be expected to terminate for more specialised talk. It tends to be initiated and terminated by the professional. It can take place in parallel with the interviewer's or professional's control of the environment, for instance while the 'tape recorder is being set up' or while the dentist is drilling, and thus may imply unequal interactional rights and be sustained even without the participation of the respondent. (It is very difficult to respond with your mouth full of drill.)

Para-chat may also occur when there are alterations to the environment which are not under the control of the professional; for example when the window cleaner appears at the window during an interview. Such chat indicates that this lifeworld interruption is attendable to. It may ostensibly replace professional talk i.e. replace the dominant expected discourse with another; as when the consultant apparently chats inconsequentially in order to establish whether or not you have got concussion or in order to put over a health promotion message. Indeed, there are occasions where ordinary talk is called upon almost as a euphemism, where the mild term 'chat' is substituted for sterner descriptions of talk such as 'dressing down' or 'telling off', etc. For example, when one's employer says 'I think we need to have a chat about...' one knows that this is not, in fact, going to be a casual chat. Here topic or purpose has been decided in advance by someone of superior status. Whether any of the features of a chat are likely to apply - that it should be non-threatening, that there is relatively equal participation and so on - depends on other features of the context. Participants are, on the whole, sophisticated in their understanding of the sort of instruction that 'I think we

should have a chat' encapsulates in particular circumstances: for example, they may well read such an opening as a warning of bad news.¹² Directives such as this capitalise on ordinary members' understanding of the functions of different types of talk and their ability to take advantage of this. This sort of chat is not the same as 'ordinary chat': it is differentiated by the status of the participants, the institutional context and possible pre-allocation of topics. Thus, para-chat may place the lifeworld in an ambiguous context. People may fear to make lifeworld disclosures during periods of para-chat because they can see that such disclosures may be re-framed by professionals.

In most situations in which para-chat takes place the interviewer/professional instigates the chat and if the respondent fails to appreciate this condition the occasion may become problematic. To continue to chat when the interview proper has started, to fail to revert to specialised talk when the window cleaner has been acknowledged, to try to respond fully with the drill in your mouth, etc., all create interactional troubles.

So, para-chat is something that takes place *in relation* to the main event: before, after, or during. Its status is defined by the interview. We would not generally speak of an interview interrupting a chat. For those taking part, the placement of para-chat is a significant contextual resource. At the beginning or end it may be interpreted as lifeworld chat. In the middle during the course of the interview proper participants may contextualise it in a different way and see it as being 'used' in some way by the professional.

Para-chat seems to me to be a sort of hybrid category of talk, having some features of specialised talk but replicating casual talk as well: it may be a form of talk that exists in a sort of symbiotic relationship within any interview. And such symbiosis must be significant for those involved, since rules and roles vary depending on the type of talk people see themselves as being involved in. As will become clear later, one of the significant characteristics of my own interview data for this project is that although I was interviewing in a sub-setting of 'a visit to the psycho-geriatric clinic', a medical setting, what I was producing was para-chat: this situation could be seen by other participants as puzzling, anxiety-provoking and possibly as devious. Additionally, it may have alerted participants to problems of frame within the interview.

¹² A friend of mine was invited to the doctor's who told her he just wanted to have a chat, prior to breaking the news that one of her parents had a terminal illness.

Transcribing the data

As I collected my audio-recorded data, I began to listen to the tapes and to try to monitor the process of coming to have a point of view on it. For the purposes of the study it became necessary for me to transcribe the data so that I could present extracts in the final thesis, and the transcript extracts that resulted are, in some senses, an embodiment of a point of view.

Elinor Ochs' article 'Transcription as Theory', which examines the transcriptions of interviews between adults and children, played an important role for me in suggesting some of the problems related to the issue of transcribing (Ochs, 1979). Ochs challenges the notion that hard data, such as tape recordings, escape the criticisms levelled at intuitive data: the problems, she says, '[...] are simply *delayed* until the moment at which the researcher sits down to transcribe the material from the audio or videotape' (p.44). She goes on to cite a number of transcription issues that relate to assumptions about power and control within a conversational episode. These include looking to the left hand side of transcripts for the 'opening up' of interaction, the assumption being that the first move sets a frame for the conversation and (in the case of her own research) the presentation of the adult as the initiator with the child as respondent. The situations Ochs describes have some similarities with my own data, where people who are competent (initiators/normal speakers) ask questions of those who are seen as incompetent (respondents/confused speakers). Thus my interview data involved sets of 'more powerful' people and 'less powerful' people and this had a bearing on how I went about the task of transcribing.

Transcribing is like making a map of the terrain: a detailed ordnance survey map serves a different purpose from the map one draws on the back of an envelope of how to get to the house from the railway station. However, both attempt to capture features of the terrain relevant to the purpose for which the map is required. At the outset of the map making process one might outline major features and then consider scale, detail and so on as refinements for a particular purpose. A variety of types of transcription are used by ethnographers, and even within a discipline such as ethnomethodology people make transcriptions for very different purposes. For example, Goodwin uses highly detailed transcription for work on 'Forgetfulness as an interactive resource' while Schegloff's more categorical work on 'Formulating place', at times, uses a more simple set of transcription conventions (Goodwin: 1987, Schegloff: 1972b).

In this section I want to look at both practical and conceptual issues which arise from the process of transcribing. I have been impressed with Speier's discussion of how to make a transcript and acknowledge it here as a checklist for my own discussion of some of the issues important to me (Speier 1969: 77-86). I discuss the process of transcription with my own interviews in mind and also comment on important issues relating to the process of transcribing the other data I used.

A first transcription

I transcribed all my data myself because I wanted to plot the process of my understanding of the tapes. The quality of the tapes that formed my data varied and I could not always clearly hear what was going on. I had the most troublesome tapes amplified and transposed on to new tapes; but, even so, I had occasional problems hearing what was said. I generally tried to do a first transcription within the week that followed the interviews, although this was not always possible. For each ten minutes stretch of data recorded it took me roughly one hour to do a basic transcription. I typed my transcriptions directly on to my computer, finding this an easy way to adjust the text when I suddenly 'heard' whole phrases as I listened to the tapes again and again.

On my first transcription of each tape I attempted to document only a basic schema of turns, allocating these to the correct people and merely paraphrasing parts of the conversation that were lengthy discussions between myself and carers. I used a new line for each new speaker and ran what they said on without a paragraph break until someone else started to speak. I used dots (...) to indicate pauses: slashes (/ /) at the end and beginning of turns where there were overlaps. I noted groans, external noises such as laughter, bangs, instances of indexicality and indications that someone was nowhere near the microphone with bracketed comments (bangs, laughter, afar etc.) attributing groans and noises to specific individuals when I was sure who it was. If I could not understand or hear any parts of the tape I noted this with question marks '(?????)' or '(mutters)'. Here is an example of the sort of arrangement I used for my first phase of transcription:

Extract 2

Mr Bruner:	(???????)
Pam:	So I like I co don't live with anyone whose got dementia (noises) and I can't know what its like//
Mr Bruner:	//No no//
Pam:	//And to talk to them//
Mr Bruner:	//No no//

Mrs Bruner: //This is sore Dave (she's had a blood test on the inside of her arm)
Mr Bruner: Yes it will be for just a little while and then it'll soon be better.

My main problem at this first stage of transcription was not being able to understand all the talk I could hear on the audio tapes and this was a problem with tapes from all my sources. One tactic I used to cope with parts of the tapes I did not understand was to replay and listen to unintelligible bits several times and another was to leave the tape a few weeks and then come back to it. Sometimes these tactics would do the trick and it would suddenly occur to me what was being said. Also as I became more familiar with some of the tapes I began to see what it was that was *probably* being said (putting these revelations in brackets). I was able to make more meaning of the whole transcript as I went on.

The problem of inaudibility of parts of the tapes was exacerbated by the fact that a number of people to whom I talked were very quietly spoken. Additionally, my own transcription labels for talk that I could not understand varied and I tended initially to think of confused speech as unintelligible mutterings. I have to confess, looking back on my first round of transcribing, that whereas usually I wrote '(?????)' when I could not understand what normal speakers said, I tended to write '(mutters)' for the people I perceived as having confused speech. Sometimes I revised this on a second transcription, sometimes I did not. Analytically, the difference between 'unintelligible' and 'inaudible' is a moot point. It is rather like who 'owns' a silence. In using the term 'inaudible' one might attribute an inability to hear what others have said to problems of sound reproduction, environmental noise; and thus the concept is interpretable as the *hearer's problem*. However, to say someone is unintelligible is to attribute the deficit to the *speaker*. As I noted earlier, I had an underlying expectation that certain people would be more intelligible in interviews than others. I did not expect confused speakers to be intelligible, and thus saw the problem residing in them rather than in deficits in my own hearing. And so in this early transcription work I used ordinary members' reasoning to attribute unintelligibility to confused speakers and inaudibility to normal speakers.

Another problem was the level of detail in which to render the transcript. This was partly to do with the issue of deixis. I found I was providing more imaginative descriptions of what I thought was going on in my colleagues' tapes compared with my own. Having been present at my own interviews my recall assured me that a Jumbo Jet had not driven into the side of the building while I was talking to people. I could remember incidents which

generated some of the non-verbal noises on the tapes: those that I recalled being attended to by confused speakers I transcribed (a car going by), those that appeared immaterial (my bangle making a metallic noise against the table) I did not. However the Bruner tapes and Moyra's tapes also had quite a lot of non-verbal noises and here, of course, I had no recall of what was going on. I included more of these noises in my initial transcript and made attempts to infer whether they were relevant to the talk or not. A case in point arises in Moyra's conversation with Tilly:

Extract 3

Tilly:	Aye?
Moyra:	Your Deep Heat you were going to show it to me. ¹³
Tilly:	Oh yes (long pause, 17.4 seconds accompanied by some foot falls and rustling) this piece of carpet's mine you know.
Moyra:	I know oh that's it is it?

Given my initial knowledge of Tilly as an older woman with confused speech I might expect that a conversation involving her would not, perhaps, follow normal rules or necessarily follow on topically. I might expect that she would speak about some rheumatic ointment and then move without a topic link to talking about the carpet. But I also need to know that Moyra is with Tilly in her flat and that a contentious issue – whether this is Tilly's flat – has just been extensively discussed. On returning from fetching the Deep Heat ointment the carpet becomes another piece of ammunition for Tilly's argument. In this light Tilly's remark is a further demonstration on her part that although the furniture is hers the flat is not.

Developing the transcripts: a dynamic process

My early transcription work showed me that the process whereby one comes to see something as significant in the data is a complex one. In her article on local knowledge, Rawlings (1988) makes some observations about her relationship to the transcriptions she produced. The remark I empathise with most is 'I spent a good deal of time looking at some of the detailed transcripts of meetings I had collected without any real idea of what I was looking for' (p. 158). Anderson and Sharrock (1984: 108) note, in relation to some work by Schegloff, that once the data are collected the solution is there: 'the analytic task is to discover what problem the corpus is a solution to'. This process of seeking a problem, or of not knowing what I was looking for, was accompanied at this first stage of transcription by using my computer to try

¹³ Rheumatism ointment.

out different ways of arranging the transcript to give me new ways of looking at the data. For example, I used two columns for the main speakers and put the interviewees' talk in the left hand column. And at one stage, when I was analysing Moyra's interview with Tilly, I stripped out all of Moyra's talk to check whether Tilly's talk made sense as a monologue.

In the process of developing the transcripts I began to do some more detailed transcriptions. This was largely a result of beginning to know what I was looking for. And this came about in two ways. Firstly, it resulted from beginning an analysis which used some of the central concepts of conversation analysis and other analytic traditions: adjacency pairs, insertion sequences, face, identity and so on. That is to say, I used some ready-made concepts which could bring order to the data. This can be seen as a function of my becoming acculturated into being (at least a novice) conversation/discourse analyst and thereby finding a specific way of seeing the data. Using these concepts I went through my hard copy of the transcript and made pencilled annotations, picking out small segments I wanted to examine in more detail. For example, in one segment involving summonses and answers, I used a stop watch to time gaps between them and developed a layout for this piece of transcription which emphasised the issue of timing.

As I listened to the tapes, I realised that I was imposing categories on the speakers as well as on the talk. These categories corresponded roughly to that of respondent (as displaying talk that was of interest) and of informant (as offering information about some subject of interest). As potential informants some people were reliable and others were unreliable. However, there was, in my developing understanding, an almost perfect correlation between confused speakers and unreliable informants. So, for example, when confused speakers put forward facts of some kind I 'listened' for dissonances, corrections by normal speakers and other evidence to support the view that these speakers were interactionally incompetent; in other words, I was using my ordinary member everyday common-sense knowledge that these speakers were hearable as confused and that the context would offer up some evidence that this was so. I might also say that for the purposes of the study confused speakers treated as were reliable respondents, in that they fulfilled the requirement of displaying talk that was interesting because it was confused.

All this clearly has implications for my own interpretation of the status of the participants. This dawning realisation of the way that I was listening to

the tapes was reflected in the transcription process; thus I tended to produce less detailed transcripts for people I was interested in as informants and more detailed conversation analytic transcripts for people I was interested in as respondents. So, the selection of transcript conventions and the mode of analysis were, as it turned out, a function of each other.

Secondly, having done my basic transcription and picked out fragments for detailed transcription I also began to explore the data as complete conversations. It became clear to me that it may be significant that people with confused speech 'sat out' whole segments of the conversation. This suggested that in the early stages of transcription I had understood confusion to be manifested in short stretches of talk and had not looked at the whole conversation as a significant unit. So I went back and transcribed the remaining talk on the audio tapes, including stretches of talk between myself and carers. It also became important to do this because by then minimal answers (most noticeably 'yes') were becoming a major preoccupation of the study, as a distinctive feature of some confused speech, so I wanted to know in detail how much different confused speakers talked.

Finally when I lighted upon materials that I decided to use in the thesis I went through transcripts again, attaching to them some conventions taken from Gail Jefferson's transcription system (Schenkein: 1978). This process, in turn, often 'uncovered' yet other new features of significance in the data. Primarily these additions related to ways of annotating overlaps at the beginning and end of turns (see Appendix 2 for transcription conventions used). While Jefferson's system is generally accepted to be the most comprehensive available for conversation analysis, many authors have tended to offer a selected version suitable for their own purposes and those of the reader (for example, Potter and Wetherell: 1987, Silverman: 1993). At points, notably when focusing on sequence I use aspects of Jefferson's conventions. Elsewhere, when I am concerned solely with the substance of what people say I present transcript in the form of a simple dialogue.

Transcripts and selectivity

Ochs notes that making a transcription is a selective process: it reflects the theorising and definitions of the researcher (Ochs 1979: 44). Indeed, in some respects, we can see making a transcript as in itself being the 'fieldwork' of the conversation or discourse analyst. In addition, the layout and presentation of the transcription is there to be read by ordinary members according to cultural conventions. Thus Ochs suggests that the page layout of

top to bottom, left to right will be seen to present certain non-textual information: incidents represented higher up the page take place before those lower down; when a sentence does not make sense to a reader he or she will return to the immediately preceding sentence and then to the one before that in order to ascertain relevance, and so on. In relation to research on children, Ochs observes that, in adult terms, what they say is often irrelevant and that therefore a transcript of children talking to adults requires a reader to 'suspend the expectation that sequentially expressed utterances are typically contingent and relevant' (Ochs 1979: 47). Similarly, the left to right layout of pages of text represents words to the left of other words on the same line as having been produced earlier. Speier notes the way that names of participants are used in transcripts – transcribers produce consistent titles for the participants rather than veering between, for example, 'Adult 1', 'Man', 'Father' and personal names when transcribing the talk of one person (Speier 1972: 406-407). Indeed, to change titles of participants in the middle of a transcript might be seen to be making a marked point of some kind. All this is to suggest that the transcriber's task is to generate a transcript which not only selects data for a research problem but also acknowledges an awareness of the cultural conventions that accompany the act of reading. Researchers do not only develop, use and read transcripts as researchers but also as ordinary members. Thus ordinary members' reading of a transcript or any text needs to be oriented to in the act of transcribing.

After reading Ochs it is easy to fall into the trap of trying to produce a transcript which transcends all cultural conventions and bias! This belief is comparable with that outlined by Briggs in relation to interviews:

The claim is that the influence of one or more of a range of independent variables, such as the age, gender, race, political views, personality, or interactional style of the researcher and/or interviewee, can "bias" responses to questions. The assumption here is that if you could strip the interview situation of all these factors, the "real" or "true" or "unbiased" response would emerge.

(Briggs, 1986: 21)

There is no such thing as a truly interpretation-free neutral transcript: if there were it would make no sense (Psathas and Anderson: 1990). If something is to be represented textually in English it has to go on a page and it has to be organised in some way, and readers will read the conventions in order to give themselves a context – that this talk came before that talk, that the same set of participants is involved throughout and so on. This is textual contextualisation. As Atkinson notes more broadly in relation to ethnographic texts: 'Ultimately there will be no escape from conventional

forms of some sort' (Atkinson 1990: 175). It seems to me that what is necessary is to try to be aware of the conventions that one uses and to allude to them as and when they are germane to the direction of the analysis.

I chose to produce transcripts with a left hand column denoting names, and a right hand column under which talk proceeded in turns, each turn being concluded by a paragraph end. It appeared to me that this conveyed the sense of the conversation as a continuous narrative. But it also enabled me to read the left hand column vertically to get a sense of the sequencing of turn, particularly the interventions of carers.¹⁴ I hoped that by doing this I would avoid too much emphasis in the transcribed talk on 'initiators'. I also decided to 'name' most of the people involved rather than designate them as 'wife' or 'daughter', since carers acted as informants in their own right on many occasions.

I think it is important also to note that in producing these transcripts I was producing documentation of the incompetence of some of the people concerned. For me this was a central feature of the talk and I wanted it to be apparent to anyone on a first reading. Thus in my selectivity I did not choose to produce transcript details of other features which would have made the text any 'odder' to read. For example, one aspect of talk I did not attempt to capture at the first transcription (or later) was regional accent although number of the people I interviewed had quite strong accents. Atkinson (1992: 28) notes the problems of attempting a faithful rendition of regional accents, in particular that this can be seen to patronise speakers. So in disattending to accent in my transcript I edited out this aspect of the talk for the reader. However *all* transcripts disattend to some aspects of talk, even highly detailed ones.

I chose not to produce the very detailed transcripts sometimes seen in conversation analysis (where the only way I, at least, can make sense of what was said is to try reading out loud what is on the page when the sense appears to be obscure on a first reading). I wanted to transcribe the text so that it is *readable as confused* on a first reading by an ordinary member, just as listening to the tapes or being at the interviews would lead the ordinary

¹⁴ For ease of reference, I have also frequently numbered utterances in extracts, again subscribing to a common assumption that the order of the numbers will be seen as in some way significant in the analysis.

member to understand it as confused speech.¹⁵ It seems to me that this is no more a piece of artifice than any other decision made about how to transcribe. It is a decision to produce a particular sort of map; what is important is to articulate this so that people have the key to read the map.

The selection of transcript excerpts as illustrations for the study is another stage in the process of generating a thesis. As in other accounts, the extracts in this study are there to be read as significant in some way. If the thesis is about confused speech the reader is alerted to find confused speech in the extracts.¹⁶ Since most of the extracts are short – the implication, for the reader, is that confusion can be discerned in momentary episodes. Moreover, most of the short interview extracts begin with an utterance from a normal speaker. So, even in the choice of extract the sorts of bias that Ochs discusses can be generated. While I may have escaped the ‘left hand column opening up’ bias, I have not escaped the notion of the first remark (by a competent participant) as framing each episode of talk. However, in my interview data the competent participants actually *do* speak ‘first’ most of the time, producing questions that require a response from the respondent, and this is a significant issue for me to deal with in my analysis. The exception to this is the Bruner data where Mrs Bruner begins many of the episodes of talk, and I have reflected this in my choice of extracts.

Also, of course, much transcript material has been left to one side and never transcribed beyond the first stage. Examples have been chosen which are considered paradigmatic in some way, that represent ‘the problem’ and act as the resource for its solution (the solution being my analysis). This process of selection is not evident in the transcripts that appear in the study, although the analysis, I hope, will explain why the data that are presented are germane.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how my research focus emerged from an initial project involving other research interests, and outlined how my data was produced. In the case of the interviews I carried out, I explored the significance of the clinic setting by looking at spatial and temporal markers

¹⁵ Jefferson aimed to produce ‘a system of notation and transcription design intending to produce a reader’s transcript – one that will look to the eye how it sounds to the ear’ (Schenkein 1978:4). Not all conversation analysts appear to have used the conventions to this end.

¹⁶ See Anderson and Sharrock: 1984, and Richardson: 1990, for remarks concerning the construction of learned articles.

and at the ways in which the interviews were located in this context. As regards the data collected by two Open University colleagues, I outlined their problematic nature in that I could only infer from the audio tape and from discussions with the interviewers what went on. I compared the two pieces of data, pointing out that in Tom's interview the physical setting had been largely neutralised (even in the unedited version), while in Moyra's interview it remained a significant feature. I suggested that in the former the structure of the event as an interview was dominant while in the latter episodes of domestic interaction were also involved. Nevertheless even the nomenclature I have used above – 'Tom's interview' and 'Moyra's interview' – is clear evidence of inferences that I made on the basis of these two pieces of talk.

I moved on to discuss some recordings of domestic interaction between Mrs Bruner, an older woman with dementia, and her husband/carer. I noted that these selections were partly based on Mr Bruner's ideas about what would be interesting and relevant to me as a researcher. I emphasised the importance of physical and domestic settings in these recordings and observed that they often focused on events that were not primarily verbal.

Next, I discussed a variety of formats of talk available to participants in the events that comprise my data. I described how in my own interviews I adopted a loosely structured ethnographic approach, but noted that this model was probably not available to the interviewees. I briefly discussed medical, survey and media interviews as possible guides for participants to use in their own performance, noting also the possibility of some events having a mixed or ambiguous character. I went on to summarise some of the features of conversation and compared the concept of ordinary chat with specialised or para-chat that occurs in situations where institutionalised talk takes place.

From this discussion of the data I moved on to consider the transcription process. I described my own approach, outlining some of the problems I encountered and some of the solutions I adopted. I noted that the transcription process was affected by my own ordinary member's views of the relative credibility of the participants: that is, I was initially ready to hear confused speakers as unintelligible when I could not hear what they said, while hearing normal speakers as inaudible in similar circumstances. I suggested that the transcription process was significantly related to problems

of inference in situations where I had not been present, and outlined how I assimilated inferences about physical settings into my transcripts.

The process of transcription in the development of this thesis was a dynamic one which continued throughout the research right up until I was writing final drafts. I did not know what I was looking for at the beginning: coming to find more in the transcripts was generated by trying different approaches to transcription and analysis. Usually, at any one time, my collection of transcribed materials contained items at very different levels and stages of completion and was being pursued to bring out different points and to draw on different analytical traditions. In fact, the way I have dealt with transcripts can be seen as a metaphor for the different traditions upon which I have drawn in this study. On the one hand I have undertaken some analysis which, as Sharrock and Anderson (1986) suggest, is more interested in utterances than speakers, and is thus very much in the tradition of conversation analysis. In other places though, I have placed the speakers as actors at centre stage, following more closely Goffman's orientation in seeing the performance of the actor and the interaction order to which it is related as a central focus of analysis (Goffman: 1959, 1963a and b, 1972, 1983a etc.). The transcript extracts employed in the study reflect this, being different sorts of maps for different sorts of terrains.

Chapter 3

Openings

In this chapter I examine in more detail the question of how the context in which the data for my own interviews was constructed by focusing on it in one particular part of the interviews – the openings. As will become clear, the nature of my meetings with confused people and their carers cannot be taken for granted. While the participants entered the anteroom with some contextual information, what they encountered there was not a clearly defined and unchanging context but one that had to be re-evaluated and re-constituted depending on what happened during the course of the interaction. Given this, we must ask: what work did participants do to bring about the kind of interactional events that resulted? What sorts of occasion did people anticipate? Was it seen as a medical interview, a research interview or a conversation: or was it a combination of all three? And, if it was a combination, how did people identify which mode of talk to take up to begin with? In this chapter I will explore these issues by examining the initial stages of interviews with Mr and Mrs Hoy, Mr and Mrs Toll, Mrs Inman and her daughter Mrs Grace, Mrs Bowles and her son, Mr and Mrs Pugh and their daughter Mrs James, and Cora and her nurse.

Focused interaction and membership

All interactional events are co-operative achievements. They depend on parties' interpretations and willingness to comply. One of Goffman's central concerns is how social occasions of various kinds are established through the activities of participants. He develops a set of types of context to map the spectrum from asocial to socially co-operative behaviour. At one end of this spectrum is a gathering:

[...] any set of two or more individuals whose members include all and only those who are at the moment in one another's immediate presence.

(Goffman 1963b: 18)

Goffman distinguishes this from social situations proper, which take place when 'mutual monitoring occurs, and lapse when the second last person has left' (Goffman 1963b: 18). Then there is what he refers to as focused interaction. This consists of:

[...] the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention, typically by taking turns at talking.

(Goffman 1963b: 24)

Goffman argues that focused interaction often takes place within social occasions. These are:

[...] bounded in regard to place and time and typically facilitated by fixed equipment; a social occasion provides the structuring social context in which many situations and their gatherings are likely to form, dissolve and re-form, while a pattern of conduct tends to be recognized as the appropriate and (often) official or intended one – a “standing behaviour pattern” [...] Examples of social occasions are a social party, workday in an office, a picnic, or a night at the opera.

(Goffman 1963b: 18)

A social occasion offers the possibility of episodes of focused interaction flowing and merging into each other, of a situation where monitoring is taking place, as well as various people being gathered together. Any putative social occasion which does not involve focused interactions will be accounted a failure, as at a party where people only monitor each other or a social outing where participants do not talk to each other. The examples of social occasion cited by Goffman are large scale and might be seen to encompass, in the case of my own data, an entire visit to the psycho-geriatric clinic rather than merely a talk with me. Clients' visits to the clinic did involve gatherings that formed, dissolved and reformed: moreover, they were usually constituted to involve focused interaction – in the waiting room, in the consulting room and in the anteroom. Indeed, in the assessment and anterooms focused interaction was usually a primary requirement. My experience of the occasion of a visit to the clinic was that generally focused interaction was easily and promptly accomplished in the various sub-settings, particularly the assessment room and the anteroom. Certainly, in my interviews focused interaction was achieved satisfactorily in all but two cases. However, to achieve focused interaction is not in any way to define what *kind* of interactional event is occurring. This requires other interpretive work.

In maintaining a standing behaviour pattern appropriate to the occasion participants spend time making sense of what is going on, and this includes categorising the people they are with, since this influences their perception of the situation. Speier points out that a key issue:

[...] about terms that label persons into social positions is that the manner in which such terms are used by cultural participants is decided in each and every case of human interaction. The relevance of this term over that particular term is always enforced by participants when doing things together. It is never simply an issue of which is the one and only correct term, but rather it is always an issue of which, among many competing terms, is the relevantly correct one for the occasion.

(Speier 1973: 37)

Here Speier draws on the work of Sacks who pioneered the analysis of membership categories. Sacks saw membership category devices as ways of signalling and discerning in talk situationally appropriate interpretations of category words. Thus 'babies can't walk' refers to them from the point of view of being at a certain stage of life. 'The baby's mother fed it' indicates a baby in a particular familial relationship. Sacks defines membership category devices as:

[...] containing at least a category, which may be applied to some population containing at least a member, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of application, for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorization device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application.

(Sacks 1972: 332)

Following from Sacks, I define category-bound activity here as that which is seen to be appropriate to a membership category (Sacks 1972: 335).

Knowledge of membership categorisation devices and of appropriate category-bound activity is a central part of the stock of common-sense knowledge which members share about the social world and a common competence in applying it defines membership of society in generic terms (Payne: 1976).

The promotion of focused interaction and membership work are functionally related in that 'sustaining a single focus of attention, typically by taking turns at talking' (Goffman 1963b: 24) will involve an understanding of the circumstances in which one is likely to be called to take a turn at talking, and this in turn requires an understanding of the relevant membership categories of participants. All such work will also be functionally related to contextualising work.

The clinic context

The clinic context can be seen to be a resource for membership categorisation work on the part of all participants, providing clues as to possible and appropriate category-bound behaviour. Such membership categorisation work may precede the beginning of focused interaction and, indeed, even the occurrence of a gathering. In my own case, although I did not have precise information about the ages, symptoms and diagnoses of all the clients to whom I talked, the clinic context furnished me with some information, for example about the diagnosis of confusional disorder that had already been made. In addition, because I sat in on a number of assessments listening to what had been said by clients and carers and had also been briefed by the consultant, I did on occasion have some knowledge of prior circumstances of

the lives of the clients. For example, at the outset of my own interviews with them I knew that Mrs Hoy was in her late 60s and had begun to manifest signs of dementia in her early 50s and that Edith, Mrs Bowles and Mrs Inman had all suffered from confusion for some years. And I knew too, that Mrs Pugh had only shown signs of confusion for a few months. It should also be noted that I assumed that the prior information I received from the consultant and the assessment was accurate and relevant in this situation. In other words the context led me to accept the information and treat it as germane.

The clients and carers were in a similar situation at the outset of the encounter, in the sense that they had a resource of previous interaction and knowledge related to the clinic context with which to make sense of the situation. For example, they knew something about the possible format of the encounter: prior to my interviews clients and carers had been involved in periods of *focused interaction* during the visit to the clinic. Indeed, focused interaction as an activity 'to sustain a single focus of attention' (Goffman 1963b: 24) might be seen to be one aspect of category-bound behaviour linked to the categories of health care workers and clients in a health care setting. People expect encounters with health care workers in their professional capacity to involve bouts of focused interaction. It might be expected that everyone at such an occasion will do a lot of 'paying attention' and specifically to identify when it is their turn to talk. Thus one category-bound expectation clients and carers may have had on entering the anteroom is that there was bound to be some focused interaction (unlike a waiting room where focused interaction may not necessarily take place).

They had also had been briefed by the consultant before meeting me (or, if I were sitting in on the consultation, my mission had been explained). From my experience of sitting in on assessments I know that my concerns were introduced by the consultant as those of someone interested in communication who would like to talk to clients after the consultation, if they were willing. This suggested that the interaction was likely to take a particular direction and that there was a purpose in hand but also that participation was ostensibly a matter of choice rather than obligation. The latter is significant because generally speaking once someone had arrived at the clinic, the *choice* of being involved or not in the events that constituted a visit to the clinic was generally not offered. Moreover, clients and carers did not, in normal circumstances, leave the medical interview to talk to a researcher. More typically, the talk they might engage in after a medical interview was sociable talk with the members and staff of the connecting day

centre, and would be unlikely to be preceded by a suggestion on the part of the consultant that the day centre staff would like to have a talk with them. So the proposed talk with me offered more than one novelty – being a matter of choice (although, of course, the choice was offered by *the consultant* – a person in a role associated with managing and directing other people) and it also involved a modification to the agenda of the clinic visit. As a result of this, participants probably faced a problem on entering the anteroom, concerning what sort of focused encounter they were to participate in. However, the novelty of the situation may also have offered an inferential resource, in the sense that it implied the appropriateness of a wait-and-see attitude.

It seems likely from all this that participants would anticipate the event as being oriented to *my* interests, organised by an agenda set by *me*. They would also know that I saw them and their lives as in some way relevant to my interest in communication – thus alerting them to a way of prioritising their own knowledge and experience for the event. Because of the emphasis on *my* interests they might also think that the first move would be likely to be assigned to me and that me ‘having a talk’ with them might well be a particular kind of talk. Silverman notes:

Many kinds of activities are commonsensically associated with certain membership categories. So by identifying a person’s activity (say ‘crying’) we provide for what their social identity is likely to be (in this case a ‘baby’). Moreover, we can establish negative moral assessments of people by describing their social behaviour in terms of performing or avoiding activities inappropriate to their social identity. For instance, it may be acceptable for a parent to ‘punish’ a child, but it will be unacceptable for a child to punish a parent.

(Silverman 1993: 82)

What we might expect to follow from this is that since I wanted to find things out this would be an interview, and would involve the category-bound behaviour associated with interviews – that I would start things off with a first question and subsequently that a series of category-bound activities would be expected to follow – questions on my part, answers on theirs.

All of these factors had implications for the membership categories of those present and for the presentation they made of themselves during the encounter. Such factors were there to be interpreted by those present as part of the process of coming to see it as a certain sort of situation. The notion of what exactly ‘this situation’ was, and therefore of what a normal version of such a situation can be seen to be, is crucial to my analysis and is given attention throughout this thesis.

The initial contact

As I have noted, participants may have been able to draw on a number of inferential resources. But that still left the sort of occasion that was to take place uncertain and a matter to be negotiated. In Chapter 2 I discussed a number of interview formats (medical, survey, media, ethnographic) upon which participants may have been able to draw to inform their conduct in this situation. I also suggested that ordinary chat and professional chat or para-chat may have been formats which could inform the event. But to suggest that a number of interactional formats are available to participants still leaves them with crucial work of identifying which format is appropriate. Of course, in every situation people must work out what type of focused interaction is appropriate and use whatever inferential resources are available to do so. For example, Atkinson and Drew (1979) analyse the phrase 'Be upstanding in Her Majesty's Court for Her Majesty's Coroner' at the opening of a session in an English Coroner's court. They observe that those present have several methods for recognising this as the first statement to which everyone should attend (p. 92): it is recipiently designed for everyone; it is acted upon by other personnel who can be recognised as familiar with the court's proceedings (by their placement or uniform) and so on. Similarly Atkinson, Cuff and Lee (1978) examine how people recognise particular utterances as ways of recommencing a meeting. They note that the interpretive work required in hearing a phrase like 'Right: er' is linked to an understanding of the status of the person uttering it and to its juxtaposition to the next utterance 'Are we ready to go again?' These are situations where a particular utterance is monitored and can be seen to indicate a starting point for focused interaction on the part of some interactants and, at least, the paying of attention by others.

Out of the diversity of prior interaction and established common-sense knowledge, the focused interaction of the whole court or of the meeting needs to emerge, a structure where certain people talk at points when it is deemed appropriate for them to do so in ways that are appropriate to both the occasion and the category of person they need to be for the occasion (for example, those in the gallery pay attention to those taking interactional turns but do not take turns themselves). So both these analyses deal with how authority is recognised, why one person's actions are interpreted as legitimate and why another's may not be. In both situations the interpretation

of the opening utterance is linked in some way to other inferential resources that are monitored.

As I have noted in the case of my interviews, the end of the assessment marked the completion of one period of focused interaction. The move to the anteroom may be seen to continue the visit to the psycho-geriatric clinic but denotes the beginning of another phase of interaction within the whole occasion. My interviews all began at the end of the assessment session when either a member of the assessment team or myself took the client and carer into the anteroom. The movement from one room to another was there to be seen by participants as indicating the beginning of a new phase of 'the visit' and the continuing official nature of the visit was reinforced by the fact that they were conducted by personnel with formal roles (or someone associated with those personnel), not left to find their own way.

In the context of the psycho-geriatric clinic I did a certain amount of inferential work about people I was meeting at my first contact with them as the consultant or social worker ushered them into the room. Firstly, I assumed that these people were seen to be relevant to my project by the consultant (who was the person who could define people as confused or not). Secondly I did *not* assume that the presence of two people together was merely happenstance; I recognised them to be 'together' rather like Schenkein and Ryave (1974) note that people can be seen to be together when they are walking down the street. And, putting these two points together the presence of two people suggested that at least one of them could be subsumed under a less-than-full membership category of medical 'pathology', or incompetence. Only in circumstances where full membership will be questioned or denied are people generally accompanied by others to a medical interview.¹ So I was assuming that at least one person was 'normal' and one person 'confused' and not that these were cases of *folie à deux* or *folie à trois*.

Generally, after coming into the anteroom the consultant or social worker introduced me to client and carer(s) and left. The 'introduction' could be seen to serve as further evidence that clients and carers were being passed on to someone else with whom they were expected to interact as part of the clinic context. Following the departure of the clinic personnel there was a period of settling down. Two of the clients Mrs Hoy and Edith used wheelchairs, so

¹ Children, people with learning disabilities and people who may be about to receive some serious medical news which challenges their membership as full fit members may all be accompanied.

that spaces had to be made and people to be disposed around a fairly large table. During this phase I did not have the tape recorder on and so I can only rely on my recall and brief notes. However, the pattern here was that I thanked people for taking the time to stop and see me. So although the encounter began with a 'managed handover' (and thus suggested the continuation of the authority of a medical encounter) it immediately proceeded as an event where I presented myself as someone with no particular right to demand an encounter. I want to note that focused interaction was generally achieved non-problematically immediately upon the entry of the client and carers into the anteroom. Talk commenced and turns were taken. There were, for example, no lengthy silences in response to my introduction of myself.

At this early stage I also began to form character impressions of the people who had come into the room (and had already done this at the assessment, if I had sat in on it). I formed an impression of the various participants as nervous, depressed, pleasant and so on (both clients and carers); in other words I assigned identities to them (Goffman: 1963a). Indeed, my ordinary member's judgments of aspects of self-presentation created some difficulties for me in that my own construction of the experience of confusion prior to this was such that I found it unlikely that being pleasant and laughing a lot would be associated with being confused. On the other hand, being nervous or depressed seemed to me to be eminently suitable emotional states in which to be if one were confused, or even if one was caring for a confused speaker. In fact, Edith and Mrs Hoy, who were both pleasant and apparently amused by the proceedings, were probably the least normal speakers; whereas several more competent speakers appeared to be markedly depressed. The important point is that from the outset I was doing interpretive work on the self-presentation of the participants; interpretive work rooted in prior common-sense reasoning of the virtual identity of people suffering from confusion; work requiring modification as the occasion proceeded (Goffman: 1963a).²

The introduction of the tape recorder

After we were seated I asked permission to use the tape recorder. I did not explain that I wanted to carry out a research interview before the tape

²Recall the point made by Kitwood (1992) and cited in Chapter 1: the behaviour aberrations of normal people are not seen as significant but those of sufferers of dementing illnesses are seen as connected to their illness.

recording began. I think that this order of development in the interaction may once again have suggested someone with the licence to begin proceedings without a contextualising explanation (for example, in the same way that a nurse taking a blood sample during a consultation might not offer an explanation).

The presence of a tape recorder operating in a conversation is not congruent with it being an ordinary conversation: its use may be seen as a category-bound activity. People do not normally record talk. Talk is usually transitory and can only be recreated imperfectly through the recall of the members who have been present. Ordinary people generally only tape record from the radio and records: people who tape record live social interaction are members of distinctive social groups, those who want for some reason to put what is said on record.

When people do record interactions, generally their identity needs to be validated in some way. If someone came up to you in the street, switched on a tape recorder and started to interview you would want to know *who* they were. Their activity would need to be validated by membership in some appropriate group (local radio, school child doing project, newspaper reporter). Those who professionally occupy a medical setting can legitimate both the lengthy interrogation of one person by another and validate a record of this event. Researchers do not have quite so much licence. At the beginning of a research interview, the tape recorder has to be introduced. This introduction is part of the ethics of the role of the researcher, and at the same time implies the explicit introduction and definition of this particular role.

My tape recorder became something of a force in the interviews, despite the fact that recordings were never played back for any of the participants. It acquired some moral energy of its own. It remained in sight throughout the interview and was referred to occasionally. It had some significance for those involved in the occasion, at least at the beginning:

Extract 1

	((Beginning of recording))
Pam:	(Just put that on) ((Loud cough)) Find that I haven't got it switched on or something like that yes it is this is its little ears for recording ((Laughs))
	[
Mr Pugh:	Ignore it=
Pam:	=Yes (.) just ignore it erm [...]

The utterance contains an anthropomorphic reference to the tape recorder as having ears, and this can be seen as giving *the recorder* responsibility for hearing and thus allowing me to distance myself at that time from being the person who is making the record. Occasionally reference to the tape recorder recurred later in the interview:

Extract 2

- Mr Bowles: No no that was a saga from last year that's another story and I'd rather you didn't tape record it=
[
Pam: No no
Mr Bowles: =It's I mean you don't really want to hear about it I've just recited it in there you see=
[
Pam: Yes
Mr Bowles: =You know I mean I don't want the name of the company=
[
Pam: No no
Mr Bowles: =That I went down to=
[
No no
Mr Bowles: =What it amounts to is ((tape off for about 3 minutes)) It was a very unfortunate experience=
Pam: [
Yes
Mr Bowles: =Now you can understand why she gets confused.

Extract 3

- Barry: It just proves a point here while we've got this tape on=
[
Pam: Yes
Barry: = That if your system and your body is out of sequence it does affect you.

In Extracts 2 and 3, the tape recorder was again identified as a *listener* for whom I was responsible, this time by carers. This may also have implied for them, at least, that my membership category was something which had some continuing existence after this meeting, in the form of listening to the tape. In one sense, at least, the record of this event was viewed as dangerous or potent knowledge and I and my membership category, as a researcher and as a worker at the Open University, were associated with that (Hughes: 1977). My emphatic 'no' answers expressing agreement with Mr Bowles in Extract 2 seem to reinforce the idea of the potency of tape recording.

The recordings generally began as I talked about setting up the tape recorder. At the outset of the recording I sometimes described the technicalities of the tape recorder to the confused speaker (compare this with the mode of distancing myself from the recorder in Extract 1). Below is one of three similar exchanges:

Extract 4

- Pam: ((Low)) I'll put it over here. *Do* you mind if I put it over here because I've got a very loud voice((laughs))
- Mrs Hoy: [Yes=
- Pam: =And you've got quite a quiet voice=
- Mrs Hoy: =((Low)) Yes.
(4.0)
- Pam: So (2.0) Do you want to hold it?
(2.0)
- Mrs Hoy: ((Animated)) Ye:s=
- Pam: =Would you like to hold it?=
(2.0)
- Mrs Hoy: =((Animated)) Ye:s
(2.0)
- Pam: I'll put it in your hands (1.0) *Oh* you've got a biscuit there (Look there's a little pot)=
- Mrs Hoy: =Yes=
- Pam: =I think that's quite a clean saucer I'll put the biscuit on it=
- Mrs Hoy: =Yes=
- Pam: =OK=
- Mrs Hoy: =Yes thank you=
- Pam: =Can you see the wheel going round?=
(2.0)
- Mrs Hoy: =Ye:s=
- Pam: =Can you?=
(2.0)

I commented about the loudness of my voice and the quietness of other people's voices and placed the tape recorder according to my assessment of this. In an unrecorded conversation not being able to hear is usually dealt with locally at the time that one of the participant's voices sinks to inaudibility. Here, as the interviewer, I attempted to orchestrate the conversation for subsequent hearings, i.e. so that I would be able to hear the conversation on tape adequately when I relistened to it. Accommodation was made so that the tape recorder could do its job (the job the interviewer wants it to do – to record adequately the answers of the confused speakers). The equipment was oriented to the person with confused speech. At the beginning of none of the interviews did I, as the interviewer, mention that the carers had quiet voices. I defined the people to be involved in the conversation (or at least the conversation in which I was interested) as myself and the confused speaker, and positioned the tape recorder accordingly.

There was an aspect of global management from the outset, therefore. The focused interaction was not intended to develop into a conversation where carers could join in, just as those seated in the gallery are not seen as having the right to join in at a court of law. This could be seen to relate to Rawlings' maxim about hearing therapists as reliable but uninteresting (see Chapter 2; Rawlings: 1988). My anticipation of hearing carers as uninteresting was so powerful that I did not organise the environment to hear them at all!

And this piece of organisational work on my part contrasts with the organisation of ordinary conversation, where generally speaking we do not anticipate in advance that some of those present will not be ratified to speak. However, when carers did speak I did not attempt to alter the environment by, for example, switching the tape recorder off.

Given that I was hoping for an informal conversation where participants had relatively equal status, this raises the question of the extent to which this piece of early interaction relating to the tape recorder could be seen to indicate that this was a joint venture between myself and the confused speakers. The most obvious marker of a joint venture might be seen to be the use of pronouns, for example, by using 'we'. However, using the term 'we' may not necessarily imply a joint venture (Payne 1976: 39). In the case of a teacher use of 'we' can be seen as a rhetorical device designed to legitimise a situation where there is a power differential. 'We' are not actually joined together as members of the same category.³ Very often, however, I used the pronoun 'I' during this activity and thereby my authority to set up the form of the encounter is taken for granted. For example Extract 1 denotes 'I' as the person who is responsible for adjusting the tape recorder. In Extract 4, I attempted to encourage more involvement on the part of the confused speaker but I made all the proposals as to how the setting up would take place.

My requirements in relation to the tape recorder had priority, but I did offer involvement to some of the confused speakers: I offered the tape recorder to both Mrs Hoy and Edith to hold. They were to play a role in looking after the tape recorder, but very much a subordinate one. In fact, later in the interview Edith switched off the tape recorder and there was a mad scramble on the part of both Barry, her son, and myself to switch it back on again: an indication that 'switching off' the tape recorder was not a valid activity for Edith to engage in and thus casting doubt on the notion of collaboration. For an interviewee to switch off a tape recorder or to ask for it to be switched off there has to be a reason that is contextually valid. Mr Bowles' reason (Extract 2) related to some delicacies regarding the acquisition of a television set. In seeing himself as required to contextualise something his mother had just said he saw it as necessary to say something compromising. But when Edith switched off the tape recorder it was not

³ Indeed 'we' may be used in a classroom in an ironic sense as in 'I wonder if we are all paying attention Jenkins?'

deemed to be contextually valid, since no reason was given for the action and no valid reason could be inferred by the other participants.

In various ways, then, the opening sequences of these interactions are set apart from casual, mundane conversations:

- they are recorded and thus are not ephemeral in the manner of ordinary conversations;
- the recording of the event may imply to clients and carers that this is some kind of 'official event', possibly an interview;
- the talk of the people with confused speech is seen to be important to me even before I have heard what they are going to say;
- I demonstrate that I am not so interested in a record of what people other than confused speakers say; (though when carers begin to take turns – usually very early on – I do not turn off the tape recorder which suggests that I see *any* interaction which takes place within this setting as worthy of a record);
- I take responsibility for monitoring the immediate environment in ways I define as related to the generation of the conversation.

In these respects, I said and did things related to my membership category as a researcher at this event (reinforced by how I had earlier been introduced) that implied I had a right to control the situation for my purposes. We might suggest that, even though mutual monitoring was going on, as the interviewer I took a lead role in establishing the nature of the focused interaction and its recording. And this fact could be taken to indicate my 'legitimacy' as a member of a category of people who have the right to do this. Moreover, the act of my dealing with the tape recorder suggested that certain category-bound activities must happen before the *meeting proper* could begin. People can normally be assumed to be aware that this category-bound activity both prefixes and signposts the *real reason* for the meeting: the reason for which the record is going to be made. The *setting up* of a formal occasion is one of its distinctive characteristics and this may provide cues as to the membership categories of those present.⁴ The paradox, recognised by Mr Pugh and myself in Extract 1, is that even though it significantly changed the

⁴Informal conversations rarely have prestarts. Where they do, people talk about getting their cups of tea, getting comfortable and so on: such prestarts usually anticipate that some news is going to be told and indicate that people are getting ready for it.

nature of the event and assigned to me and others specific membership categories, the tape recorder *was to be ignored* suggesting, perhaps, that participants were expected to behave as if this were a non-recordable 'ordinary' conversation: and this implies, at the outset, a certain amount of ambiguity about the nature of the occasion.

The reason for the conversation

It will be apparent from this discussion that the clinic context, the initial contact between myself and clients and carers, and the setting up of the tape recorder all provided resources from which participants may have been able to infer reasons for the conversation they were about to have. And indeed many interactional formats rely on such inference to provide an informal justification. For example, in ordinary conversations people do not often give explicit reasons for what they are saying or doing (or the direction in which they are taking the conversation). Much of the time they do not need to. It is assumed that other participants will be able to infer such reasons; if not at that moment, then later. Similarly in some formal situations, medical ones among them, participants may infer reasons for the conversation rather than being given them. This process may be facilitated if they are offered a particularly powerful context. Strong (1979) has developed the concept 'role format' to refer to the *whole ceremonial order* of an institutional setting. Such a role format, as defined, offers participants cues as to what sort of frame to operate within. Some role formats are so powerful and operate within such a broad spectrum of common-sense understanding that reasons are not required and we might suggest that the ceremonial order surrounding going to the psycho-geriatric clinic may come into that category. This may have been the reason why at the outset of my interview with the Bruners, Mr Bruner took the initiative in interpreting the reason for the conversation, making inferences from the tape recorder's presence, and suggesting that it would not record the reality of Mrs Bruner's *illness*, thus linking the interview to the reason for being at the clinic. Similarly, on more than one occasion I, too, used the sequence of events of 'a visit to the clinic' to begin the conversation, offering my absence from what went on in the consulting room as a way of legitimating my talk without exactly giving a reason:

Extract 5

Pam:	Right=
Mr Bowles:	=() You're asking questions what have you you=
Pam:	=No I just wanted to, having missed the whole of the preceding er twenty minutes, I mean I was just going to ask you about erm I mean things like wh wh you know er do you come from Jessop?=

Mrs Bowles: =No from Yorkshire.

An opening such as this could be seen as belonging either to medical talk or to ordinary talk. However by suggesting that I had 'missed' the whole of the previous twenty minutes (the business of the assessment) other participants may have been able to infer that it was in some way my business too (since only people who claim some right to be at an event or interest in it can claim to have missed it) and thereby that this conversation should continue in a medical frame. So, being aware of the ceremonial order of the clinic enables participants to produce appropriately recipient-designed talk for their co-conversationalists without necessarily giving reasons for the conversation.

My most protracted attempt to explain the reason for the conversation was with Mr and Mrs Pugh:

Extract 6⁵

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. Pam: | Like Doctor Brown said in the other room I'm I'm looking at erm how people's speech might change if something you (.) know if they've had an illness like p'haps you might have had and so I was interested in the sorts of ways that people talk. Is that worrying you? ((The tape recorder))= |
| 2. Mrs Pugh: | = ((Quickly)) No no |
| 3. Pam: | [Shall I put it to one side? |
| 4. Mrs Pugh: | [No= |

In Extract 6 the beginning of Utterance 1 is a justification for what I am going to do. It is a reason in my own terms but it also carries part of its weight from the explanation that the consultant has given in the assessment. My reason for the conversation shelters under the wing of the doctor's relationship with this client. This further reinforces my social identity as official in some way, and is intended to legitimate subsequent questions. In seeing the doctor, the client has become a special case of someone who, at least temporarily, can release her claim on full membership, but has become a subject for investigation.

However, while I was being assimilated into a medical role and made use of it, I did not have any specific medical authority. Moreover, it was not a medical interview that I wanted to carry out and this was signalled by the fact that I engaged in the procedures (asking permission to set up the tape recorder, and in some cases giving a reason for the interview) that would not normally occur in medical interviews. In this respect I, too, suffered from

⁵ This extract follows on immediately from Extract 1.

some role confusion, and my exhibitions of confusion may have been, in themselves, confusing to other participants; not least because they would be unlikely to expect confusion or embarrassment on the part of an interviewer in this sort of context.

The first question

The next thing that happened in the interviews was an opening question put by me to the confused speaker. This first question was often quite abrupt in relation to the prior conversation. This might be seen to be appropriate by participants, given that in interviews the move from the warm up stage to the interview proper can often be quite sudden: indeed many professional situations involve abrupt shifts from preliminaries to the purpose in hand and there was no reason for the participants to suppose that there was anything odd in that procedure here. But this interpretation, of course, is part of the work of seeing the occasion as an interview. Such sudden transitions made by particular participants in certain contexts may be seen as an indication of their interactional rights. Such rights do not suggest that the person in charge will say more than others: indeed many interviewers say less than interviewees. What is implied, however, is that they have a right to control the agenda, to intervene to ask questions which demand topic changes or modifications, to ask for clarification, to draw the interview to a close and so on. In research interviews even if there is no schedule of questions there is some notion of global management and some pre-allocation of interactional rights. Subsequently, topical connectors are not absolutely necessary in an interview because the interviewer retains the floor after each response to a question.

The placement of questions in talk may be seen to be of significance for participants. Normally we may suppose that if a reason for the conversation has been given it contextualises at least the immediately following exchanges. Moreover, we might suggest that all early talk in a conversation may be used as a resource for contextualising purposes, and that if a reason is not given people may infer reasons from early questions, just as they infer reasons from the physical setting, participants' presence and so on. However, in this case, the nature of the questions added to the potential ambiguity. Here are some examples of the first couple of 'inventory type' questions I ask.

Extract 7

Pam

So you were saying in the other room that you were born in Linton.
Do you come from round Jessop?

Your wife was saying when you were in there that you'd been to Tenerife?

Were you brought up in this area are you from the Midlands?

Where were you born?

Do you come from round Jessop?

The nature of the questions I ask may be seen as heightening the abruptness of the start of the interview, and potentially adding to the ambiguity of the situation. Participants have to work out from prior context an interpretation of why I ask 'Where do you come from?' or 'Have you always lived round here?' and so on. They have to interpret an occasion where questions such as 'Where do you come from?' can legitimately be asked and *what sort of a member* will ask them. What is potentially puzzling is that these questions, while purportedly the beginning of the interview proper, are in content the sort of questions that would be at home in a *conversation* among strangers. Only in the unlikely event of my interviewees being familiar with life history or oral history interviews would these initial questions seem like interview questions. Moreover, since this was the type of question I continued to ask throughout the interview the hypothesis that this was initial para-chat would have been abandoned at some point. Their persistence, and the resulting implications that they are the sort of questions of which the whole interview will be composed, may well have conflicted with expectations about the likely nature of the interview. At the same time they approximate in some respects to the sorts of questions that sometimes occur in medical interviews where someone's cognitive functioning is being assessed. In these ways the ambiguity of the event in which participants were involved persisted.

Faced with such ambiguity the decision about how to answer any question relates to occasion and membership. We might suggest that an opening question of an interview or conversation would be recipiently designed so as to facilitate the possibility of a successful answer. Questions such as those cited in Extract 7 are built on an assumption of a shared stock of knowledge that events concerning life history are a legitimate opening topic for a conversation or an interview with someone whom you do not know. And, indeed, in much the same way as Turner (1972) notes that a choice of certain topics (for example the weather) embraces the largest possible number of participants so too we could expect that common life history questions would have a good chance of a successful answer from a large sector of the population i.e. they are questions that 'anyone', 'everyperson' or ordinary members should be able to answer. And even given that, in

This utterance attests to the difficulty of introducing a first topic without making the explicit link that I was interested in the competence of Mrs Pugh's talk. The use of 'It sounds a bit silly really' seems to relate quite closely to Schegloff's (1980) discussion of what he calls 'pre-delicates' – the signposting of talk or questions to come that may be uncomfortable such as 'Can I ask you a personal question?' Additionally, we could suggest that 'It sounds a bit silly really' can be seen to be some sort of moral positioning, in the sense that I should be heard as a silly person and thus, that any responses to my 'silly' questions will not be judged harshly because I am placing the interviewee in a delicate position. This is somewhat similar to the moral positioning discussed by Silverman in relation to HIV counselling (Silverman: 1994).

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, 'I just wanted to have brief talk with you' suggests some preallocation by the speaker, thus claiming authority. On the other hand, 'just' possibly acts as an indication of 'merely' (not to be seen as important), perhaps aligning the conversation with casual inconsequential talk and thus assigning equal interactional rights. The use of 'for example' suggests a model of some sort is going to be offered and this contrasts with the idea of a naturally occurring, locally managed conversation (although examples might be required in an ordinary conversation, the requirement is usually for clarification of something that is being discussed). Overall, I seem to have wreathed my pre-specification of the talk in embarrassment and ambiguity.

A problem for carers: a one to one interview or multi-party talk?

I have suggested that participants may infer that there are a number of possible interactional formats for this event. The clinic setting, the initial contact, the business of the tape recorder, the reason given for the conversation and the first question can all be seen as resources with which any participant can do inferential work in regard to the nature of what is happening; but without any very clear determinates. There is, however, a further complication. As has been noted, much of my activity in the early part of the interview was oriented to the client, who I expected to be the person with whom I would be interacting. Yet carers were present during the whole of this period and, for them, the question may not only have been 'the beginning of what?' with regard to the encounter but 'How am I to be involved, if at all?' So one decision that they had to take was whether they

were, in fact, ratified to participate. And how carers took their cues over this varied. One carer, for example, did not join in until addressed by the confused speaker at turns 37 and 38.

Extract 9

37. Mrs Bowles: =And the village Atlas Street was quite long wasn't it?=
38. Mr Bowles: =Yes=

Mr Bowles only enters the conversation on the invitation of his mother. This could suggest that, as far as he is concerned, the talk hitherto has been satisfactory and, indeed, his response would indicate that it still is. It may be that he does not initially perceive the occasion to be one where multi-party talk is appropriate, though an invitation by the respondent for him to talk is not easily to be ignored.

By contrast, other carers began to contribute to the talk very early on in the proceedings. It seems to me that this provides some clues as to their understanding of an appropriate interactional format for the occasion at that point in time. For carers to intervene at all can be seen to indicate that they saw contributing their own talk (and thus transforming the conversation into multi-party talk) as within the legitimate range of possibilities for 'this sort of occasion', whether they saw it as a medical interview, a research interview or an ordinary conversation. There were a number of specific types of interventions by carers:

Extract 10⁶

17. Pam: Do you you listen to music at home?
(1.0)
18. Mrs Hoy: Well I like it yes=
19. Pam: =What sorts do you like?
(1.0)((Bangs from tape recorder))
20. Mrs Hoy: O:h (3.0) ((laughs)) It's a long while ago.
(2.0)
21. Pam: What do you listen to?
(4.0)
22. Mr Hoy: You like Foster and Allen don't you?
(1.0)
23. Mrs Hoy: Mm yeh=

This suggests that very early on in the proceedings Mr Hoy has formed a working knowledge of what is required on the part of the participants, and may (from past experience) have realised that his wife is not going to be able to provide it. He may have oriented to the *five* lengthy silences that precede his intervention and have interpreted these as noticeable absences of answers

⁶ Follows on immediately from Extract 4 which has involved the setting up of the tape recorder.

(that is, silences that would be heard as significant by participants as implying that the respondent will not or cannot answer, and so on; Schegloff: 1972a). He may also have concluded that Mrs Hoy would have problems with answering open-ended questions, since his intervention produces a closed question.

Mr Hoy's early intervention is not an isolated case:

Extract 11

Pam: [...] I was interested in in what people what people can remember and things about their childhood So (.) Can you can you do you come from round Jessop. Do you come from the Jessop area? (3.0) Were you brought up in Jessop? (4.0) No.

Edith: () I *don't* know=

Pam: =Where were you brought up?=
Edith: =((Mutters))
(3.0)

Barry: Where were you born?

Here Barry intervenes to put a question to his mother. It can be seen that although I have put four questions, all slightly differently phrased, they are interspersed by a total of fourteen seconds silence and an negative answer on Edith's part. Barry's question reduces the scope of the field somewhat (after all, Edith may have moved ten times in her childhood and my questions could actually be quite difficult for her). Again, as in Extract 10, the silences could have been a key factor for the carer in making an intervention.

However, other carer interventions were not precipitated by silences on the part of the confused speaker:

Extract 12

((Beginning of recording))

Pam: [...] Do you come from round about Jessop?=
Mrs Inman: =I've always lived at (Betchworth) Biddington=
Mrs Grace: =No you lived in Biddington when you were young:er mum you've always lived in Jessop since you've been married=
Mrs Inman: =Oh yes=

Extract 13⁷

Pam: [...] Are you from Staffordshire?
(.)

Mrs Pugh: From Staffordshire yes =
Pam: =Where do you come from?
(.)

Mrs Pugh: Er Norton no er Stanall ((Laughs nervously)).
Mr Pugh: You live at Stanall now=
[]

Mrs Pugh: Oh erm

⁷ Follows on from Extract 5

Mr Pugh: Clayton where you was born?=
Mrs Pugh: =Clayton.

Mrs Grace enters the conversation to correct her mother while Mr Pugh enters to help his wife provide fuller biographical details. In both Extracts 12 and 13 there are prior attempts to self-correct on the part of the confused speaker, and incorrect self-correction may be seen as legitimising entrance into the conversation by others. More broadly, the need for correct presentation of biography can be seen to be a possible justification for a carer entering the conversation.

So far we have two sorts of initial interventions from carers: reformulations of my questions in situations following noticeable silences, and corrections of answers by confused speakers. Each of these interventions implies that the occasion requires an orientation to my agenda. Carers did not choose to do 'something else' with the conversation. Rather, they made interpretations about what was appropriate to the context and sought to effect a realisation of it. This is underlined by the next extract shows where the carer considered the talk both from the point of view of the interviewer and of the interviewee:

Extract 14

Pam: Your wife was saying when you were in there that you were in that you'd been to Tenerife (.) for your holidays.
Mrs Toll: [No he's been to Devon=
Pam =You went to Devon=
Mrs Toll: [To Devon
Pam: =Where where did you go in Devon?=
(1.8)
Mr Toll: ((Low)) Where was it?=
Mrs Toll: =To Dawlish=
Mr Toll: =Dawlish.

Mrs Toll can be seen to be concerned to establish that my initial question is based on an erroneous assumption. She intervenes to correct me, suggesting possibly that one thing that interviewers should do is be technically correct in their utterances. She may have assumed that Mr Toll will not be able to take on that task of correction, or alternatively that my incorrect information (attributed by me to her) reflects on her truthfulness (in terms of Grice's maxim of quality). The second half of Extract 14 implies that Mr Toll appreciates that correct answers are appropriate to the occasion, even if he cannot give them. I shall discuss this issue in greater detail in subsequent chapters when I come to the main part of the interviews.

For the carers the nature of the event was emerging utterance-by-utterance, each utterance providing more contextualisation. I accepted the entry of the carers into the conversation and this acceptance was there to be interpreted as another clue as to the nature of the conversation. If, at the first intervention by carers, I had said 'I wonder if you would mind if Mrs X tried to answer the question for herself', I may well have closed down the possibility of a multi-party conversation; but I did not, and this had consequences for how the interviews evolved.

Interactional problems

In most of the interviews I conducted, focused interaction was deftly accomplished by at least some participants. Regardless of whether confused speakers were monosyllabic, or could not remember their own life histories, or whether I was embarrassed or carers intervened significantly, a single focus of attention (usually oriented to my questions) was achieved almost immediately. However, there are a few cases in my data where focused interaction was not achieved. Take, for example, the case of the Bruners:

Extract 15

	((Beginning of recording))	
Mrs Bruner:	[...] Hey mi duck hey=	
Pam:	=Right=	
Mrs Bruner:	((Looks at the tape recorder)) That's it then	
Mr Bruner:		[Sometimes thought about
	putting my tape recorder=	
	[]	
Mrs Bruner:		Dave.
Mr Bruner:	=on when we're at home.	
Pam:	Yes.	
	=[[
Mrs Bruner:		Oh:h: h: h.
Mr Bruner:	(She isn't always quiet)=	
	[
Pam:		Yes.
Mr Bruner:	=She isn't always she doesn't=	
	[
Mrs Bruner:		Hey ay: y
Mr Bruner:	=You know like she is at the moment.	

Two-party interaction was quickly achieved in this encounter between Mr Bruner and myself. However, as can be seen, Mrs Bruner's talk was, at least to begin with, not oriented towards the turns of the other two participants but away from them. Here, if verbal interaction was to take place immediately the onus was on normal speakers and, indeed, this imperative may have acted as a motivation for Mr Bruner to participate from the outset.

There was also one case where I was unable satisfactorily to set up the tape recorder, to present a reason for the interview or to get many questions answered at all (these being a whole series of conversational projects requiring focused interaction). Cora, who was in her mid-seventies, came into the room with a young nurse in her early thirties. I had not been present at the assessment and have no idea whether or how focused interaction had been achieved there. During the course of her stay in the anteroom with me, Cora sat down hardly at all, and spent most of her time roaming around the room and heading for the door. At times her voice is quite difficult to hear on the recording because she was moving around so much. At the outset there was some question as to whether she was deaf, and on the audio tape the pitch and modulation of my own voice can be heard to alter as I try to work out whether Cora can hear me.

There was a small section at the beginning of the encounter where I tried to set the tape recorder up :

Extract 16

Pam:	CAN I PUT THIS HERE? =
Cora:	=Eh=
Pam:	<i>Can I put this here ? (3.2) Can you hear me ? (.)</i>
Cora:	((Low)) Eh=
Pam:	=((Low)) Can you hear me? =
Nurse:	=(Drink)=
Pam:	=Can you hear me? (1.7) ((Low)) Can you?
	(1.0)
Cora:	((Low in tone)) (Mmmm mon)

The setting up of the tape recorder is ignored by Cora and its significance in relation to my membership category is therefore apparently ignored. By roaming around the room Cora also pre-empts my attempts to control the environment. Acknowledgement that a recording is to be made in no way features in her actions, unless we can see her attempts to escape from the room as related to it. In fact, we can suggest that this almost fails to be a situation at all, since mutual monitoring does not always take place.

This is not an anarchic piece of discourse, but my questions were rarely answered because Cora resisted. My definition of the situation was never successfully imposed. As I have already noted, rights to the definition of the situation may be a characteristic of certain participants, for example an interviewer. My persistence in trying to put the conversation on the rails was only equalled by Cora's resistance. She was not amenable to the particular interactional format I offered. She was not even amenable to being party to a gathering. She did not want to be co-present in the room with me .

The recorded conversation is 79 turns long during which I got only a couple of my questions answered.

Extract 17

Pam: Where are you going back to? (4.7) Where do you live?=
 Cora: =Pardon=
 Pam: =((Desperately)) *WHERE DO YOU LIVE?*=
 Cora: =Just down here.

Notice here that although the response is likely to be correct, the formulation is not that of someone answering *an interview question* about where they live ('In Stanall' or 'sheltered accommodation in the village'); in other words answering according to the project of the questions or as Sacks puts it '[...] what you can see that the question wants to find out, is something that controls how you answer it' (Sacks 1995a: 56). I should add that the refusal on Cora's part to answer at all or not to answer according to the project of the question increases the desperation in my voice as the interview goes on and sets it apart from all the other interviews!

I did not succeed in establishing a topic at all with Cora. However, although a single focus of attention was not established, turn taking was regular and evenly patterned as the following extract shows:

Extract 18

Pam: Do you come from Carbridge?
 (2.5)
 Cora: What?=
 Pam: =Do you come from Carbridge?
 Cora: =(GA:RBAGE?)=
 Pam: =CARBRIDGE. Do you come from *CARBRIDGE?*=
 Cora: =Ah I ain't stopping at them=
 Pam: =No where do you come from?

During the conversation Cora usually speaks after an utterance has been addressed to her. Sometimes her answers come back after a pause or she 'misses' one turn and I have to repeat a question. Although regular in occurrence, many of her answers have no obvious propositional content. The number of adjacency pairs where a question by me is followed by an (unproblematic in my terms) answer by her is only four in the entire recorded conversation. And of these four, only one is an adjacency pair which has *not* been preceded by another adjacency pair of which the second pair part was 'what', 'eh' and so on. For example:

Extract 19

Pam: Are you hot?=
 Cora: =What?=
 Pam: =Are you hot? (1.0) Do you want to take your coat off?=
 Cora: =Yes=

There were a number of cumulative chains of double adjacency pairs:

Extract 20

Pam: Where do you live? (2.0) Where do you live? (.)
 Cora: Uh?=
 Pam: =Where do you live?
 (1.0)
 Cora: (What did they tell you?)

Almost half the conversation (38 turns) is devoted to four and six turn clusters of repeated questions and obscure (from the interviewer's point of view) or propositionally empty answers. So although we have some of the constituents of focused interaction, we do not have all of them. Although there is turn taking there is little co-operation.

Cora's main line of resistance is her talk and activity centred on trying to leave the room. Note that in his study of people with dementia in a Dutch residential home Coenen says 'The sense of time is not absent in the residents' experience (Coenen 1991: 325). And he goes on to talk about preoccupations residents have with 'I have to go' (p. 325). Similarly we can see that Cora has a real sense of purpose in her desire to leave this interview. As part of a number of her turns she says 'Come on' (i.e. a command or request to leave) mainly to the nurse (or occasionally myself) twelve times, and other sentiments relating to going another three times (i.e. 'Are you going to stop here?'). Nearly all these directives are addressed to the nurse (who she chucks under the chin several times) and most of the time her tone is quite urgent. The nurse rarely responds. One of the categorical imperatives of my membership as an 'official' is that people pay attention to me. Cora pays scant attention to me. I am not a person she identifies as being able to facilitate what she wants to do. And, therefore, I am of no further interest.

With the exception of mentioning to me that Cora has a thing about moving or cleaning the furniture the nurse hardly speaks. She does not attempt to 'get' Cora to answer my questions. She does not interpret my questions for Cora. On the other hand she does not respond to Cora's requests to 'Come on' either. Indeed it is I who break first:

Extract 21

Cora: Come on you (If you're going there) come on.
(1.0)
Pam: I think you might as well actually=
[
Cora: COME ON
Pam: Thank you very much.
Nurse: ((Laughs))
=[
Cora: (Where you going then)
Pam: ((Low)) don't want to hold your morning up any longer ((Laughs))
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.
(4.0)
Cora: Come on look here (what I've been all opening).

The nurse's main acknowledgement of me as an interviewer in action is to keep Cora in the same room (not necessarily near the microphone). However, there are also moments in the interview with Cora when the nurse deliberately seems to efface herself, realising perhaps that as long as Cora's focus of interaction is on her, it cannot be on me. For example, she looks away slightly when Cora is berating her and only answers Cora monosyllabically as though not to encourage her. At the same time, she does not in any way help Cora to identify herself as a person being interviewed. There are only three people at the gathering, and a multi-party conversation or a two-person conversation are the only possible combinations to produce focused interaction. The episode is composed of three different interactions: Cora and I talking, Cora and the nurse talking and the nurse and I talking. Of these three interactions those involving Cora and myself involve no single focus of attention.

One other interesting thing that this brief encounter shows is how important to the definition of the role of interviewer it can be seen to be to establish focused interaction. Interviewers who do not establish focused interaction have not succeeded. My suspicion is that in informal social circumstances, as one of the participants, I would have withdrawn from this conversation substantially sooner than I did. Consider the number of substantive questions I put in a conversation consisting only of 79 turns.

Extract 22^a

Has it been good weather here?
Where are you going back to?
Where do you live?
Where do you live?

^a This extract has not been transcribed to show turn construction, only the number of substantive questions I put during the interview.

In a house?
 What sort of house?
 Have you always lived round here?
 Have you always lived round here?
 Do you come from round here?
 Do you come from Carbridge?
 Do you come from Carbridge?
 Carbridge do you come from Carbridge?
 Where do you come from?
 Where were you brought up?
 Where were you br. Where were you brought up?
 Where did you live when you were little?
 Where did you live when you were a little girl?
 Where are you going to go now?
 Where are you going to go now?
 Where are you going to now?
 Where do you live?
 Where do you live?
 Where do you live?
 What's this lady's name?
 What's this lady's name?
 What's this lady's' name?
 When you come here do you always come by ambulance ?
 When you come here do you always come by ambulance?
 Is it in walking distance?
 Could you walk to where you live from here?
 Do you stay here for your lunch ever when you come here to see the
 doctor. Do you stay for your lunch?
 How long will the ambulance be?
 How long will the ambulance be until it arrives? Does it? Is it later in
 the morning?

Seventeen turns are devoted to my questions (containing a total of 33 questions). Cora's answers are usually 'eh' or statements that indicate her resistance to the interactional format on offer. But I still persist. In normal social circumstances (i.e. casual conversation) a person receiving so little encouragement might be seen at best as intrusive and at worst as incompetent. Again, this suggests that, my intentions as to casual conversation notwithstanding, the interactional format I am offering participants is very much an interview. In persisting with Cora I am taking up my interactional rights as interviewer. It is my membership of the category of interviewer that enables me to carry on. Indeed it may have obliged me to carry on claiming membership of that particular category in order not to be seen as an incompetent ordinary conversationalist.

Conclusion

My concern in this chapter has been to examine the way in which the interviews I carried out with confused speakers in the clinic were jointly constructed from the outset, and in a couple of cases failed to get established.

I began by suggesting that four of Goffman's concepts are particularly relevant to my discussion of the opening phases of my interviews: gatherings, situations, focused interaction and occasions. I looked at some of the inferential work that people may do to orient themselves at the beginning of an occasion and suggested that participants would normally, in the early stages of the encounter, have been doing inferential work as to what was an appropriate interactional format for this situation. I had suggested in Chapter 2 that several interactional formats could have been seen as appropriate to the occasion: the medical interview, the research interview, the ethnographic interview and casual conversation or chat. With this in mind I examined a number of constituents in the opening phases of the talk.

I looked at the clinic context and its relationship to membership categories, and explored how the encounters I am analysing might be seen to be category-bound activity. I examined aspects of the initial contact and the inferential resources these provided for participants. I then went on to consider the inferential work that might be connected with the setting up of the tape recorder by me as interviewer and I suggested that the articulation of reason for the event could be used by participants in their interpretive work in order to infer more about membership categories. Finally I looked at my opening questions, noting that the abrupt transition from 'housekeeping' talk to the topic at hand could be seen as part of an interview format and noting also the character of the questions I asked. I argued that the whole process involved some ambiguities. On the one hand, I was trying to distance myself from the medical context and to some degree from the formal role of researcher. Indeed, I was, myself, affected by role ambiguity. Yet there were respects in which I appealed to the medical setting for legitimacy, and the nature of my questioning could have been seen as reinforcing that connection, as could the fact that I was recording the event. My own sense of ambiguity was reflected in the fact that I provided reasons for the interview in some interviews but not in others, and when I did so my reasons were hesitant and rather unclear. Moreover, my display of embarrassed uncertainty may have reinforced the ambiguity of the situation for other participants.

I suggested that the topic of first questions provided more clues as to the nature of the event and pointed to the ambiguity of life history questions as being both possible first topic questions for casual conversation and interviews. In the penultimate section, I explored carer intervention at this early stage in the interview and suggested that such intervention provided

clues as to how carers were orienting to this occasion and what sort of occasion they thought it to be. I also suggested that the inferential work that carers did in the early stages of the encounter was on a turn-by-turn basis and that each turn recontextualised the situation for them. In the last section, I looked at instances where focused interaction largely failed, where the client was talking away from turn or did not want to be co-present with me as an interviewer, and suggested that only some of the conditions of focused interaction were achieved in these two cases.

The overall theme of the chapter has been that all participants were involved in a situation that they were orienting to as it evolved, and that several potential repertoires of interaction and talk presented themselves as possible formats for the event. From the outset of my interviews *I* was a somewhat ambiguous stimulus.

The appropriateness of talk always has to be judged in relation to the context in which it occurs; contexts have to be established and are not always unambiguous or uncontested. From this point of view, in theoretical terms, the identification of confused talk becomes more complex and difficult than it is presented as being in the literature. Yet, as members, we have no difficulty in identifying the talk of the people I have interviewed as 'confused'. Subsequent chapters are concerned with resolving this apparent paradox.

Chapter 4

Minimally active confused speakers

The amount of active engagement and participation in a conversation is related to its nature and how people perceive their role in it. In interviews at the psycho-geriatric clinic, from which the data in this chapter come, we can assume that achieving the purpose of the meeting pre-supposes focused interaction and that there are certain expectations about the allocation of responsibilities for the control and maintenance of this interaction; though we have seen that these are by no means unambiguous.

The degree of participation and type of active engagement in these interviews varies across the people with confused speech interviewed. Broadly, three different types of speakers feature in my data; these types reflect those I mentioned in Chapter 1 as being identified by Allison (1962) :

- minimally active speakers;
- moderately active speakers;
- very active speakers.

In this chapter I introduce the notion of levels of participation in conversation and then examine some aspects of the talk of minimally active confused speakers. I focus on four minimally active confused speakers whom I interviewed. Mrs Hoy had suffered from a dementing illness for many years and was accompanied by her husband. Mr Toll came with his wife. Edith, whose confusion was also of long duration was accompanied by her son Barry. Mrs Pugh had only recently been diagnosed as confused and came with her husband and her daughter, Mrs James.

Participation and involvement: a preliminary overview

The categories I have offered above are not merely analytical categories. Members recognise different levels of verbal participation in talk. There are ordinary member assumptions about the extent to which various participants will participate. I have noted previously the relatively equal participation that is acceptable in ordinary conversation but have also pointed to certain modifications to this format when some members, such as children, have limited interactional rights. Participation is a matter for comment and adjustment within specific conversations, and more globally. This is illustrated by common sayings such as: 'Couldn't get a word in edgeways',

'Cat got your tongue?', and 'vaccinated with a gramophone needle' (see Dingwall: 1980). However, participation alone is not the only factor to be considered: involvement, too, is pertinent. Conversation is occasioned activity which Goffman defines as follows:

To be engaged in an occasioned activity means to sustain some kind of cognitive and affective engrossment in it, some mobilization of one's psychological resources: in short it means to be involved in it.

(Goffman 1963b: 26)

Involvement can be described as the degree to which people are committed to their chosen or assigned role in the interaction. What degree of involvement is required, and is desirable, varies according to role, and may also be a matter for local negotiation.

Participants may try out varying degrees of participation and involvement in an event. Perhaps we can say that a concern for participation and involvement appropriate to one's identity need not necessarily be maintained throughout an occasion. Conversations, parts of social occasions, have their peaks and troughs; and there may be times when individuals feel that they have less of a vested interest in what is being said than at others. Within any conversation participants have varying opportunities for dipping out at different points, not bidding for turn when they are able to, or making minimal contributions to the topic in hand. It depends upon the type of conversation. In a classroom such a relaxation of involvement is easy for pupils, if risky. There is always the chance that they will be asked a question. It is much safer to dip out of a lecture! In a multi-party conversation too there are possibilities for one party to be quiet and enjoy a micro sleep. But there are risks attached, particularly since one of the characteristics of such conversations is that any individual speaking may choose to address any other individual. A two-party conversation of whatever sort probably offers least opportunity for relaxing one's involvement since each participant is, as it were, always on call to be the next speaker.

Participants may also seek modifications to the participation and involvement of others. As people establish context in a conversation, and assign identity to participants, they may engage in strategies to encourage those they see as participating inappropriately for a person of that status in that type of conversation to modify their behaviour. Thus children may be encouraged to 'pipe down', that is to participate less, or to 'pay attention', that is to become more involved. Members may use devices to sanction an oscillating interest in maintaining identity as when others say 'You're quiet

today', or invite a comment from a particular participant to indicate that they see that person's identity as currently being involved. This means that participants need to be ready for any turn that is offered or requested.

All this is to suggest that since the events I am discussing in this chapter are ambiguous we might expect people to try out varying degrees of participation as they work towards defining the event. We can propose that this presentational work should be observable in social interaction and specifically in talk. So the degree of participation and involvement may in some way be reflected in the machinery of how people take turns and manage topics in the conversation. I move now to a discussion of the mechanics of turns and turn taking in my interviews with minimally active confused speakers. This provides a framework for looking at degrees of participation and involvement.

Turns

In Chapter 2 I noted that Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978) had developed a list of 'grossly apparent facts' about turn taking. They argue that these can be seen to be the result of ordinary members' ability to identify points in the conversation when a new turn is appropriate, their understanding and use of turn sizes, and their adherence to a set of rules for the allocation of turns.

In order to be able to participate in talk successfully individuals need to be able to identify points in the conversation when a particular turn might be complete, thus giving them a chance to hold on to the floor if they are already talking or to enter (or re-enter) the conversation if they are not. Sacks et al. (1978: 12) call these points *Transition Relevant Places* (shortened to TRPs from now on). In relation to this concept we could define a turn in more than one way. It could be defined as a turn unit i.e. a word which has the projectability to be seen as a complete utterance and have a TRP. Within such a definition one person might have a number of turns within one utterance (passing through a number of TRPs when they managed to keep the floor). Or a turn might be defined as the utterance that one person makes before another person takes over the floor, either at a first, or subsequent TRP. For the purposes of the following discussion I define turn in the latter way.

First, I want to note that minimally active confused speakers tended to have fewer turns than might be expected in a one to-one-interview. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of turns taken by various speakers in my interviews.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of turns taken by all participants

Client	Carer	Interviewer
Mrs Hoy 25%	Mr Hoy 32%	Pam 42%
Edith 18%	Barry 48%	Pam 34%
Mr Toll 36%	Mrs Toll 23%	Pam 41%
Mrs Pugh 42%	Mr Pugh/Mrs James 21%	Pam 37%

Each of the minimally active confused speakers had fewer than half the total number of conversational turns; even though in an interview involving two people an equal distribution of turns might reasonably be expected since the floor is shared between them. However, as we saw in Chapter 2, carers often entered the conversation turning it into a multi-party conversation. In that chapter too, I explained that I hoped to establish something along the lines of a loosely structured ethnographic interview which offered interviewees an invitation to talk; it will be noted that although in most cases I talked more than the interviewee, in no case did I take more turns than the interviewee and client together. As we shall see, this distribution of talk is a significant feature of these interviews.

It is worth noting that even though taking a smaller percentage of turns than might be expected most minimally active confused speakers recognised TRPs even when it is difficult to understand how they were using their turn, as is shown in this extract:

Extract 1

1. Barry:

Your mother, what's your mother's name?
(3.5)
2. Edith:

((Mutters expressively))=
[
3. Barry:

Normally she'd just have it straight off=
4. Edith:

=((Mutters expressively))=
5. Barry:

=And what's Grandad's name?
(.)
6. Edith:

Grandad?=
7. Barry:

=Grandad what's Grandad's name?=

8. Edith: =Name name ((Mutters expressively)).
(.)
9. Barry: Who's Tottie then?=
10. Edith: =Ma mi mother=
11. Barry: =Oh that's your mother is it? Tottie=
12. Edith: =Yes.

In many respects this sequence conforms to the grossly apparent facts as outlined by Sacks et al. (1978). Speaker change recurs, on the whole only one of the pair is talking at a time, there are slight gaps and slight overlaps, turn size varies and so on. By and large Edith orients to TRPs. The only part of the sequence where this is not the case is in Utterances 2 and 4 where she mutters expressively. There are no discernible words in these mutterings; in the main, they sound like the sort of expressive babble small children make who want to join in the conversation but do not have the words. However, even Utterances 2 and 4 may be interpreted as an attempt on Edith's part to take her turn.

Sacks et al. (1978) see TRPs as a motivating feature in conversation. One of the main reasons that people listen is so that they can identify when they can, or need to, speak again. When they do not listen they do not know when TRPs are going to occur. In order to be able to recognise TRPs, particularly in terms of whether turns are complete, people need to be familiar with the possible units of talk that can occur. Sacks et al. (1978) suggest that turns are constructed out of four different sizes of unit:

- a single word; for example, 'yes';
- phrases, several words long that do not constitute a sentence; for example, 'in the garage';
- clauses that have all the necessary components to be a sentence (subject and predicate) but do not constitute a stand-alone sentence; for example, 'they might be';
- full sentences.

Additionally, special conditions exist where the speaker intimates that he or she is going to have a longer turn than might normally be expected, often involving the telling of a story. For example, Sacks observes that 'Something terrible has just happened' does at least three jobs: it gets the space to build a multi-sentence length utterance, it warns the listener how to listen for the end of the story (i.e. presumably when something terrible has been described), and it helps the listener by indicating an appropriate response to the story (Sacks, cited in Benson and Hughes 1983: 26-27).

When we come to the sort of turn construction units confused speakers use, not surprisingly perhaps, we find that the majority of the minimally active confused speakers use very short turns, often the smallest unit that can be followed by a TRP i.e. a word. Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of various turn construction units in the total talk of four minimally active confused speakers

Figure 4.2: Turns taken by turn size; percentage¹

	Mrs Pugh	Mr Toll	Mrs Hoy	Edith
No. of turns	53	43	152	87
Word	53%	58%	78%	38%
Phrase	17%	12%	8%	12%
Clause	4%	0%	3%	1%
Sentence	19%	23%	8%	15%
>Sentence	8%	5%	1%	5%
Other	0%	2%	0%	29%

In this figure I have calculated as a percentage of their total turns the relative frequency of different turn sizes for each confused speaker. The line entitled ‘other’ represents utterances where it was not possible to understand what the turn construction units might be.

From Figure 4.2 we can see that in each case the majority of turns are one word in length. To take the case of Mrs Pugh: of her 53 utterances, almost three quarters are turn units shorter than one sentence. In an interview where the interviewer is encouraging the respondent to talk this would normally suggest that the interviewer has not been successful, or the interviewee not co-operative, or both.

Figure 4.3 shows again the percentage of different turn sizes turns for confused speakers and also percentages of turn sizes for carers and interviewer (based on a aggregates over all four interviews).

¹The figures do not add up to 100% because they have been rounded off.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of turn size by different categories of participant

	Confused speakers	Carers	Interviewer
Word	57%	19%	24%
Phrase	12%	11%	4%
Clause	2%	4%	3%
Sentence	16%	38%	43%
>Sentence	5%	24%	21%

It will be noted that carers and interviewer have relatively similar profiles, the bulk of their turns being one sentence or longer. The use of a series of minimal answers by confused speakers can be compared with my own use of them as interviewer, where such answers function typically as continuers in a monologue by carers. Here such responses can be seen to acknowledge the rights of another taking an extended turn. Indeed, we might expect that in an interview situation it would be the interviewer, who is encouraging talk from others, who would have the largest proportion of minimal utterances. Here, however, this is not the case.

Having mentioned percentage of turns taken, use of TRPs and size of turn taken by participants, I want now to move on to the process by which turns are allocated. In a two-person conversation the factors which affect conversational exchange are turn size and TRPs, who speaks being allocated on an ABABAB basis, if it is to be a conversation rather than a monologue. However, although two different two-person conversations may share an ABABAB pattern they may be very dissimilar in how turn size is distributed and how TRPs are used. For example, a lengthy exchange in a court of law between barrister and defendant might involve one person having long turns and the other person having very short turns.

When a third party enters the conversation, turn taking rules become more complex. In all the conversations discussed in this chapter carers were involved, so it is also necessary to examine the principles of turn taking in mulit-party talk. Sacks et al. propose a linked set of rules which they say account for all the possibilities in focused multi-party talk (Sacks et al. 1978: 12-13). They note that there are two forms of speaker allocation: current speaker can select next speaker and next turn can be claimed by self-

selection. From this they generate a series of rules which are formulated as follows by Levinson:

Rule 1 – applies at the first TRP of any turn

(a) If C selects N in current turn, then C must stop speaking, and N must speak next, transition occurring at the first TRP after N-selection

(b) If C does not select N, then any (other) party may self-select, first speaker gaining rights to the next turn

(c) If C has not selected N, and no other party self-selects under option (b), then C may (but need not) continue (i.e. claim rights to a further turn-constructual unit)

Rule 2 – applies at all subsequent TRPs

When Rule 1(c) has been applied by C, then at the next TRP Rules 1 (a)-(c) apply, and recursively at the next TRP, until speaker change is effected

(Levinson 1983: 298)

Given that the interactional events being discussed were interviews we would expect that turn-allocation would occur primarily by means of the interviewer selecting the next speaker and then self-selecting at a subsequent TRP and this is, indeed, what occurred most of the time.

Extract 2 is taken from an interview with Mr and Mrs Toll and represents a stretch of multi-party conversation. I want to show, to begin with, that the turn-taking patterns within this extract are appropriate to a loosely structure ethnographic interview:

Extract 2

1. Pam: Wh wh er where did you go in Devon?
(1.8)
2. Mr Toll: ((Low)) Where was it?=
3. Mrs Toll: =Dawlish=
4. Mr Toll: =Dawlish=
5. Pam: Ha had you been there before?
6. Mrs Toll: ((Low)) Years and years ago.
[
7. Pam: Did you enjoy it?
8. Mr Toll: ((Low))Yeh.
9. Pam: Did you have the good weather?
10. Mrs Toll: Take take your hand down from there.
11. Mr Toll: ((Takes hand down)).
12. Pam: Did you have the good weather?=
13. Mr Toll: =Yeh.
(.)
14. Pam: You're looking very sun tanned=
15. Mr Toll: =Yeh=
16. Pam: What's Dawlish like? I've never been there=
17. Mr Toll: Oh its nice.
18. Pam: Is it (.) What what does it look like? Is it is it erm is it hilly country?=
19. Mr Toll: =Yeh=
20. Pam: =Is it and a seaside?=
21. Mr Toll: =Yeh.
(1.2)
22. Pam: Is is there a promenade?=
23. Mr Toll: =Yeh.

- (1.7)

24. Pam: So you walked up and down the prom=

25. Mr Toll: =Yeh
- (.)

26. Pam: Who did who did you go with?
- (3.6)

27. Mr Toll: Went with you didn't I?=

28. Mrs Toll: =Yeh me and who else?
- (3.2)

29. Mr Toll: I don't know=

30. Mrs Toll: =Trevor.
- (1.0)

31. Mr Toll: Aye Trevor=

32. Mrs Toll: And Liz=

33. Mr Toll: =Oh with Liz yeh=

34. Mrs Toll: Take your hand off your mouth Jim, we can't hear what you're saying.
35. Mr Toll: ((Takes hand down))

36. Pam: Who's Trevor?

37. Mr Toll: Mi son.

38. Pam: Your son. What does what does Trevor do?=
39. Mr Toll: =What?=
40. Pam: What's Trevor's work?
- (2.7)

41. Mr Toll: He works on the buildings.

In turn-allocation people may be selected or select themselves for the next turn. Since each turn has two ends, this means that it is possible to produce four possible sorts of turn sequence. These are illustrated in Figure 4.4, along with the distribution of these turns types among the participants featured in Extract 2.

Figure 4.4: Selection of speakers in Extract 2

1. Speaker self-selects and subsequently selects next speaker	2. Speaker self-selects but does not then select next speaker
Pam: 14 Mrs Toll: 2 Mr Toll: 0	Mr Toll: 3 Mrs Toll: 3 Pam: 0
3. Speaker is selected and then selects next speaker	4. Speaker is selected but does not select next speaker
Pam: 1 Mr Toll: 3 Mrs Toll: 1	Mr Toll 13 ² Mrs Toll: 1 Pam: 0

² I have included the two non-verbal responses (11 and 35) here where Mr Toll took his hand down from his mouth when instructed. Although they do not really constitute a turn in terms of Sacks et al.'s criteria they are nevertheless a significant part of this interaction.

In many respects, in terms of turn allocation, Mr Toll behaves appropriately for a loosely structured ethnographic interview, being almost always selected, rarely selecting others and overall being the most selected speaker. As interviewer, I am only selected once by another speaker and that is when Mr Toll apparently does not hear one of my questions. My prime pattern is to self-select and select others. Interestingly, Mrs Toll is the person with most variability in turn types, appearing in all four cells of Figure 4.4. This points to her mediating role: at different times picking up the role of both interviewer and respondent with their different characteristic patterns of turn types.

Of course, when we come to the size of the turns that Mr Toll takes we find that his behaviour is, perhaps, less appropriate for an ethnographic interview format in which the interviewee is expected to do the bulk of the talking. Out of his 19 turns in this extract, the three occasions Mr Toll self-selects only reiterate what the previous speaker has said, seven turns consist of ‘yes’ answers and another two of non-verbal responses to an instruction. Thus, he does not self-select at TRPs to develop answers to my questions. Nor is this an isolated example of taciturnity among minimally active confused speakers.

Implications of minimal turn size for turn allocation

The predominant pattern of talk on the part of the research subjects who were minimally active in their talk was as follows:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Interviewer: | Talk followed by TRP (Rule 1(a) – selects respondent) |
| Respondent: | Takes up turn allocation, often after a pause, responds very briefly (does not allocate another speaker, or self-select to continue) TRP. |

This sequence is discrete but can be repeated to build up into a chain as shown in the following previous extract and in the following one where I self-select as next speaker after each of Mrs Hoy’s responses (Rule 1b):

Extract 3

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1. Pam: | What so what sorts of songs do they sing here?
(2.0) |
| 2. Mrs Hoy: | Crystal chandeliers= |
| 3. Pam: | =Do they? |
| 4. Mrs Hoy: | Ye:s
(0.8) |
| 5. Pam: | And do you lead them when they sing that?
(.) |
| 6. Mrs Hoy: | Ye:s
(.) |
| 7. Pam: | Do yo you come here several days a week?=
(.) |
| 8. Mrs Hoy: | =Yes. |

Here Mrs Hoy recognises TRPs at the end of questions four times although her response to one is after a pause (Utterance 2). In the whole conversation of 612 turns, there are 84 pairs of turns like this between Mrs Hoy and myself. Utterance 2 is one of the few times in the conversation where Mrs Hoy offers an answer other than 'yes'; and perhaps here it is significant that Mr Hoy has mentioned that she liked this song six utterances previously and we have been talking about it for all the subsequent turns. Thus we can see that minimally active confused speakers recognise TRPs, and can fill in a turn slot but that this is usually only with a brief response.

Most of Mrs Hoy's turns are a single word, usually 'yes'; and this response has consequences for the selection of the next speaker. That is to say, a speaker who chooses a single word turn does not self-select a next speaker, or (usually) select someone else as speaker. A single word turn like this honours the obligation of responding to a turn allocation from another, but it does not involve bidding for or allocating another turn. It always permits, indeed requires, another speaker to self-select as next speaker. An unqualified 'yes' answer can only do the job of confirming. A continuing string of 'yes' answers can be seen in a number of ways, as:

- implying others have the right to allocate turns;
- or*
- imposing an obligation on others to allocate turns;
- or*
- permitting the conversation to peter out.

Other single word responses perform a similarly limited job. 'No' can only refuse. A repetition of what someone has just said provides no additional information on the part of the speaker (as Extract 2 shows). A term of address can only direct or redirect. For example, if Lyn says to Paul 'Are you and Sally going to the theatre tonight?', Paul may turn to Sally and say 'Sally?' in a questioning tone. The turn is used to redirect a question by selecting another speaker, not to respond to it; a pattern which is observable with some minimally active confused speakers. So single word responses can only minimally answer a question or can be used to redirect it.

Each of these options suggests a strategy involving little personal obligation and minimal participation or involvement in the conversation. Goffman's description of what he calls an involvement contour is useful here:

[..] between beginning and end there is often an "involvement contour," a line tracing the rise and fall of general engrossment in the occasion's main activity.

(Goffman 1963b: 18)

Goffman focuses on general engrossment but for individuals their own involvement contour may depend on the topics of conversation; in establishing topics that hold their own interest, modifying topics introduced by others and contributing in order to establish a relationship between the topic in hand and an identity that is available to them. In these terms the involvement contour of minimally active confused speakers remains at a low level, not meeting what would normally be expected in ordinary conversation on the basis of Grice's maxims, or in a loosely structured ethnographic interview. Interestingly, it is perhaps not so far from what is required of interviewees in some highly structured interviews.

The minimal answer and preceding utterance

We need to establish next whether the nature of the preceding questions was such as to require only minimum answers; in other words, whether confused speakers, in fact, had the leeway to produce fuller answers. This investigation is related to the nature and functions of various types of question.

Questions as first parts of adjacency pairs strongly expect an appropriate type of response – an answer. Thus, whoever the next speaker is, in normal circumstances, he or she would expect to give an answer. This means that whoever becomes next speaker has to identify a TRP at the end of a question and to appreciate that they have been selected or self-select as an appropriate person to speak next: this requires monitoring the preceding turns for the upcoming TRP and listening in this turn to see what action might be required in the next turn and also, of course, for what sort of response would be appropriate.

Part of understanding what sort of response is appropriate involves an ability to discern the type and length of answer that is suitable for specific sorts of question. A variety of question and answer formats have been identified, for example:

- Yes/no questions;
- Questions offering alternatives questions (Are you doing this or that?);
- WH questions (why, where, what, who, when, etc.)

All of these appear in the data I collected. In the way they are posed yes/no questions are restricted in the scope of the answer they require (Hausser cited

in Bauerle: 1979). As Goody notes 'These are complete propositions: in English they differ from statements only in the inversion of word order' (Goody 1978: 23). Thus 'You like country music' becomes: 'Do you like country music?' One proposition is put forward in the question and the answer required is either an affirmation or denial of its truth. If the question is turned back into a proposition then it is a complete statement standing on its own. Alternative questions are really a variant on yes/no questions, offering the respondent an opportunity to choose one of the two propositions that have been offered. In the answer, no departure is required from what has been in the question. This can be compared with questions that Goody points to as being incomplete propositions, for which the answer provides the missing clause. Thus the question 'How many people were at the party?' may be represented formally as '? (X number of people were at the party)' (Goody 1978: 23)). WH questions can be seen to fit into this sort of format. Thus 'What do you do at the day centre?' can be seen to be a question for which the answer is to provide the missing clause – '? (what you do at the day centre)'.

Whatever sort of question is posed, we can suggest that in an interview situation respondents may be alerted to the possibilities of appropriate turn lengths. However, for the most part, in a loosely structured ethnographic interview they will find that whatever the format of the question its project is such that a long answer is permissible. Indeed, even those questions which are yes/no questions can be construed in this situation as questions whose project encourages more than one word answers. One might also expect participants to monitor the extent to which lengthy responses are acceptable, for example, according to whether the interviewer seeks to re-enter at the first TRP.

Given that my orientation was to produce an ethnographic interview most of my questions were invitations to talk. Many are incomplete proposition questions. They offer the opportunity for participants to choose to take lengthy turns and pre-suppose a turn that will be at least one clause long (because incomplete proposition questions ask for a missing clause). And yet, typically, my questions get short responses from minimally active confused speakers, either the minimum one word answers that are required of yes/no questions or minimal disclaimers or silences after incomplete proposition questions. Even if people do not have the resources to answer questions, there are options open to them to facilitate the sort of talk being encouraged. For example, in the case of Mr Toll, he might have chosen more

frequently to select Mrs Toll as next speaker; thus acknowledging that more discursive answers were required and choosing a next speaker whom he knew could fulfil this requirement. But, largely speaking, neither he, nor any of the other minimally active confused speakers, did this; they continued to respond in a minimal fashion throughout.

Overall, participants need to be able to choose appropriate turn sizes for specific occasions. In terms of a loosely structured ethnographic interview we can propose a continuum upon which the most pro-active (involved) approach that can be taken is to self-select to talk in a turn longer than a sentence and indicate the telling of a story and at the end of that story to select another speaker. At the other end of the continuum we have the least active approach (short of not participating at all) which is to be selected by another speaker, to reply only in one word and then not to select another speaker. In the situation of a loosely structured ethnographic interview the interviewer might be expected to be pro-active in terms of self-selection and other-selection in terms of turn taking, while the interviewee might be expected to be pro-active in choosing to take long turns. However, minimally active confused speakers chose to produce minimal answers even in circumstances where they had been invited to talk. Of course, even though single word responses may be seen as inappropriate for the circumstances, they still perform certain functions for those producing them. By giving single word responses minimally active confused speakers behave in such a way as to reduce to the minimum their obligations to the conversation, while nevertheless remaining as participants. Such behaviour has consequences for topic management in these interview-conversations and it is to this that I now turn.

Topic Management

So far, I have noted that minimally active confused speakers rarely self-select and that their answers are very brief. The implication of this is that they have little involvement in the development of conversational topics. After all, one can only do a limited amount of work with a single word answer, primarily to react to the topics of other people's choosing. This means that the other participants must play a substantial part in maintaining the conversation through the introduction and development of topics.

A number of authors have noted the difficulty of defining topic (see, for example, Sperber and Wilson 1986: 216) and the bulk of conversation analytic work on topic seems to launch right in, ignoring any attempt at definition. I

am tempted to do the same. However, I want to note what Schegloff and Sacks say:

If we may refer to what gets talked about in a conversation as mentionables, then we can note that there are considerations relevant to conversationalists in ordering and distributing their talk about mentionables in a single conversation.

(Schegloff and Sacks 1974: 242)

In their work they emphasise the importance of placement in the analysis of utterances:

[...] a pervasively relevant issue (for participants) about utterances in conversation is why that now?, a question whose analysis may [...] also be relevant to find what that is.

(Schegloff and Sacks 1974: 241)

Thus, understanding of topic is related to its placement in a conversation. Ordinary members can be seen to be aware of the problem of introducing mentionables at the right moment. As I have noted, Sperber and Wilson (1986), in their discussion of relevance, outline the methodic search made by participants for the links between this sentence and the last one, to the one before that, and finally to more encyclopaedic contextualising knowledge. This enables them not only to make sense of the conversation but to structure their current talk so as to reflect the order and presentation of previous topics. Thus, successfully to develop topics or introduce new ones participants must be able to integrate them into the flow of talk. As Levinson remarks on the subject of topic shift:

[...] if A has been talking about X, B should find a way to talk about Z (if Z is the subject he wants to introduce) such that X and Z can be found to be natural fellow members of some category Y.

(Levinson 1983: 313)

If participants cannot do such overarching work smoothly, there are devices for mentioning something when the moment has passed or the topic is otherwise out of time.³ We can suggest that ordinary members have the resources to recognise topics which are not adequately contextualised in the foregoing talk, and that such topics will be seen as problematic. The next two extracts demonstrate two problematic topic introductions by a minimally active confused speaker. Mrs Hoy rarely self-selected in the conversation but almost all the occasions when she did were topically problematic in some way:

³ For example, 'Have I told you this?', 'To go back to what we were saying before', 'To change the subject completely' and so on.

data, the management of conversational topics can be seen to be influenced by the interview format of the encounter. Taking Sacks' lead, one possible criterion of an interview could be that it is a 'lousy' conversation. Thus, topics might be fixed antecedently by the interviewer's agenda, and relevance from one utterance to the next may be partly pre-defined in these terms. So, in the case of an interview-conversation, perhaps, this 'lousy' structure is generally more obvious. However, where minimally active confused speakers are participants the bare bones of the interview may be even more exposed: topic progression depends either on the interviewer (or on other normal speakers) or it depends on the confused speaker and is faulty. Any notion of *articulation* of topic progression from X to Z by way of a superordinate category Y has to be accomplished by the normal speakers. For this reason, too, topic control and development tend to be carried out by the interviewer or carer. In the conversation with Mr and Mrs Toll, a third of adjacency pair second pair parts produced by Mr Toll are monosyllabic. If one were to strip a transcript down and reprint only the confused speaker's contribution it would be very difficult to establish what issues the conversation deals with. For example, here is a sequence of Mr Toll's contributions taken from the middle of Extract 2:

Extract 6

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------|
| 13. | Yes. |
| 15. | Yes. |
| 17. | Oh it's nice. |
| 19. | Yes. |
| 21. | Yes. |
| 23. | Yes. |
| 25. | Yes. |
| 27. | Went with you didn't I? |

Goffman remarks:

Observe that although a question anticipates an answer, it is designed to receive it, seems dependent on doing so, an answer seems even more dependent, making less sense alone than does the utterance that called it forth.

(Goffman 1981: 5)

In Extract 6 the impetus of 'yes' derives solely from the sense of the question. It adds no more to the conversation than confirmation. It gives no clue whatsoever about topic. Unless a stretch of talk were very formal (for example, certain types of cross examination in a court of law), or perhaps a survey research, or counselling interview (see Garfinkel's counselling experiment: 1967), if the talk of individual speakers were printed out, some kind of notion about what is being said might emerge from that of any one person. This is because participants would answer according to the project of

the question or they would fill in the clauses of incomplete proposition questions and these would be ways of developing and initiating topics.

However Mr Toll, while taking on the role of uttering the second pair part, provides no material for me to build on as first pair part speaker. In order to continue this line of questioning all my first pair parts have to emerge from my own train of thought and my own experience of holidays. If we now look at the turns omitted from Extract 6 we find this collection of questions from me:

Extract 7

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 12. | Did you have good weather? |
| 14. | You're looking very sun tanned. |
| 16. | What's Dawlish like? I've never been there |
| 18. | What does it look like? Is it hilly country? |
| 20. | It is and what a seaside? |
| 22. | Is there a promenade? |
| 24. | So you walked up and down the prom. |
| 26 | Who did you go with? |

This extract shows me building up some kind of picture of the holiday in Dawlish. It involves talking about the geography of the place, some reference to how the time was spent on the holiday, and who went on it, an evaluation of how much good the holiday had done (a sun tan). In other words, I am developing a story about the holiday but with little assistance from Mr Toll.

In a sense Mr Toll is safe in this conversation, in that all that he has to do is a second pair part in response to a first pair part. If he does not provide any extra information he will not be quizzed on it. If he does not initiate a first pair part he does not have to decide to whom to address it, form it into an appropriate first pair part, risk someone not understanding it, and so on. In short, the less topic development he engages in, the less he is exposed.

So, topic management can be more or less successful depending upon the resistance or co-operation of the confused speaker with the normal speakers. And here I speak of co-operation in a less precise way than that used by Grice (1975) and those who have developed aspects of his work on principles of co-operation and implicature. On the whole, the co-operation of minimally active confused speakers involves complying with a structure presented to them by normal speakers: by not deviating from it or proposing any alteration to it they minimise their own exposure. Of course, this then raises the question of whether always sheltering within the conversational competence of others challenges one's own competence and thus defeats the object of the exercise. I shall return to this question later.

Nevertheless, minimally active confused speakers also may offer what might be called passive resistance to topic development, making it difficult for the interviewer to present any semblance of normal conversational appearances. For example, Extract 8 shows my turns in the opening phase of the conversation with Mrs Pugh:

Extract 8

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Were you brought up in this area? Are you from Staffordshire? |
| 3. | Where do you come from? |
| 7. | And I don't know Staffordshire at all. What's Tibstone like? |
| 9. | What was it like when you were a child? |
| 11. | Can you remember your childhood? |
| 13. | And how long have you been there? |
| 20. | Do you have brothers and sisters? |
| 22. | Not even... you were an only child in Tibstone and where did you go to school? |
| 24. | Drinkworth. |
| 26. | What sort of school was it that you went to? |
| 29. | Were there a lot of children there? Was it a big school? |
| 33. | Small. |
| 35. | How many classes were there? |
| 37. | When you were in the other room your husband said that you used to do a lot of gardening that was before you came. Has the flat got a garden? |

Here I develop the topic structure with a series of separate little pyramids (Staffordshire, childhood, school, these all falling under the banner of history; and then I shift to a completely new topic together with an acknowledgement of the shift: the garden). I take 15 of the 40 turns, Mrs Pugh takes 17 and Mr Pugh and Mrs James, the daughter, take eight turns between them. Mrs Pugh uses five of her 15 turns to say she does not know or cannot not remember, in response to my questions:

Extract 9

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 8. | I don't know I never go down there I never (????) |
| 10. | Oh I can't remember that. |
| 12. | Not much really I mean (???) |
| 14. | Oh (sighs) I don't know. |
| 37. | Oh I don't know. I couldn't tell you. |

These comments account for a number of her *longer* turns. They do not answer the questions: they are accounts or excuses for not answering the questions. Three more of her turns are used to confirm answers given in her stead by relatives. Thus, in this small segment of 40 turns she has less than half the turns and, of these, half are either attempts to deter the interviewer from carrying on with that topic or merely confirm what others have said on a topic. Her responses to my other questions are usually in the form of a single word. In all she gives no help with topical development except by

closing down my various lines of questioning. The possibility of developing a story is denied to me because of the refusal by Mrs Pugh to accept the topics I choose. Thus, while minimal 'yes' answers permit the interviewer to continue to build a story of some kind for the confused speakers excuses or disclaimers can act to move towards closure; a series of them 'wrong foot' the interviewer, suggesting that he or she has in some way chosen the wrong frame for their questions. And this leads me into discussion of the identity work that takes place in these interviews through the presentation of biographies.

Identity work

Having demonstrated some of the distinctive characteristics of the talk of this group of minimally active confused speakers, I want now to consider how identity work relating to them is done. I shall organise this discussion partly around the relationship between the interview situation and identity, and partly around the way that normal speakers, primarily carers, represent confused speakers in and through talk.

The interview as a location for identity work

In this series of interviews I decided to talk about life history. For each person I sought a unique history, being oriented towards a notion of personal identity as defined by Goffman:

[...] while most particular facts about an individual will be true of others too, the full set of facts known about an intimate is not found to hold, as a combination, for any other person in the world, this adding a means by which he can be positively distinguished from everyone else.

(Goffman 1963a: 74)

This unique history or personal biography contributes to personal identity and in normal circumstances to social identity (i.e. wife, father etc.). But identity depends not only on the uniqueness of the facts about someone but also on presentation. For most competent members, presentation of historical self is something that the current self might be expected to do. When adults prompt small children to answer questions about themselves, the suggestion is that even children are able to identify salient features about their history that are pertinent to presentation of self in the here and now.

In the discussion that follows I rely heavily upon Mick Atkinson's work on 'Lifetimes' (Atkinson: 1973). Presentation of self in the present and self in the past (biographical matter) is a matter of competence. Presenting one's identity is a methodic practice rooted in interpretive work involving ordinary

member assumptions about how lives are socially represented. One of the topics with which Atkinson deals is how people select particular lifetime formulations to suit the circumstances. For any occasion there are doubtless a number of correct formulations which can refer to time, space, place and biography. However, not all possible formulations will be *appropriate* to the occasion. And the occasion to which I refer, an interview in a psycho-geriatric clinic, requires an understanding not only of how ordinary members generally relate biographical issues but also of what sort of biography might be required in these particular circumstances.

One common practice when one meets someone new and wants to find out something about them is to ask 'everyperson' questions: that is to say, questions which might suit a very large possible population. Such questions indicate something about the relationship between the two people, that neither knows much about the other. However, in fact, of course, there are frequently clues offered at the outset that enable people to choose appropriate everyperson questions: for example, one is unlikely to ask a man what his experience of childbearing is. In my own case, at the outset of these interviews I had sometimes gleaned some knowledge from sitting in on the consultant's assessment and I was introduced to carers as husbands, wives, daughters and so on. So I knew that I could ask everyperson family questions. The respondents and carers knew that I was interested in communication, and had been told my name and the place where I work. They would also have been able to recognise features about me such as my age and gender (for example, that I was a middle aged woman and not a child). All these features could be expected to influence the sorts of questions that I asked.

External indicators of recognisable personal attributes notwithstanding, we can expect that people can generally be assumed, for example, to have been born and brought up somewhere, to have gone to school, to have had a job or looked for one, possibly to have married and have had children, and so on; so that general questions on these topics would suit the circumstances of a good many people. As Atkinson notes:

[...] using a particular lifetime formulation is in effect claiming its recognisability for particular hearers [...] certain lifetime formulations have a common currency aspect in that they have high recognisability potential such that they are usable anonymously. Examples of such formulations may be the following common biographical markers: When I was a child, On my twenty-sixth birthday, When I was at school.

(Atkinson 1973: 97)

The asking of such questions, then, invites responses which use common everyperson biographical markers combined with particular details.

In the case of my interviews, 'everyperson' questions can be seen as an invitation to the respondent to develop a particularistic biography, within a 'highly recognisable' biographical framework. I began my interviews with a commonly used developmental notion of the biography of the people concerned, starting with their childhood and so on, thus offering a format for the unfolding of the biography. I tried also to make personal connections with the area under scrutiny. For example, in the interview with Mrs Pugh, when the name of a local village came up I said that I had once taught there. And with other respondents, when we talked about playing cards, I noted to two people that I, too, play cards. This can be seen as the modelling of a particularistic biography, as an encouragement to the respondents that we have found a community of interest, thereby indicating appropriate future formulations in this area.

We need to note that my own use of biography to establish and further communities of interest may have contributed to the ambiguity of the situation for other participants. Firstly, negotiating communities of interest can be seen as a feature of ordinary chat. Secondly, even if the occasion is seen as an interview, this is not something that all interviews would involve: in a television political interview, for example, only the biography of the interviewee is seen as appropriate for exposure.⁴ Thirdly, when professionals establish communities of interest with clients it can be seen to come under the heading of professional or para-chat, not the main business of the interview (and it would be seen as inappropriate for the client to continue to follow this line once the interview proper had begun). These multiple possible interpretations might be seen as a significant consideration by participants in these interviews.

However, even though ambiguous, this interview format does offer a number of cues as to what sort of identity to present: a developmental biography as a framework, filled in with particular detail and presented to someone who is known *not* to know these details. But as I have noted earlier in this chapter, the characteristic responses of minimally active confused speakers were short and often propositionally empty. When someone

⁴ Occasionally the interviewee may well come back with remarks about 'You media people' as a biographical riposte.

answers only 'yes', the interviewer carries the burden of formulating the biography. Constant 'yes' answers can be seen to fail to recognise that which is appropriate to tell, or to constitute an inability to provide the relevant information. Either way, the participant fails to enter into the telling of a particularistic biography. If no particulars are filled in, the discussion continues to be highly generalised. The absence of a unique history, the unwillingness or inability to use it, contributes to the social identity of people suffering from confusion.⁵ They are no longer able to construct a personal identity for themselves. The social identity of confusion becomes an overall explanatory identity supported by gaps or absences in personal biography and personal identity. It can be seen to account for everything.

Carers and identity work

The burden of developing a biography for the confused speakers did not fall entirely on me. Carers made considerable contributions. And it is important to see what sort of person the confused speaker was being presented as by the carers. We can suggest that carers are likely to have become accomplished in 'bringing off' the identity of the confused speaker. After all, it is probably a daily occurrence for them to take part in multi-party conversations which involve the confused speaker, other people and themselves.

In the interviews under discussion, carers were able to develop a much more specific story line than I could as interviewer. For example, carers could work backwards from something that they knew should be known and relevant to the confused speaker, and then pose questions to which they could then get an appropriate answer. Indeed, this points to an almost formal knowledge of the sorts of issues entailed in adjacency pairs i.e. normal people can give answers to questions, can accept invitations and so on. Here the environment is being manipulated so that the confused speaker can also do this; choosing the way that questions are put, invitations given and so on and by offering subject areas where there is a good chance that specific questions will be answered. Particularistic biographies now begin to be filled in, whether by the asking of particularistic questions or by the supply of particularistic answers. However, carers can only give answers to the extent that they know them. They cannot have had the life experience of the confused speaker, although spouses and children may have shared a great

⁵ Such an absence might also, of course, lead to the conclusion that someone has 'something to hide'.

deal of their lives with the person, and children have been told stories about the confused speaker’s life. Thus the presentation of the biographies of minimally active confused speakers is shaped by the necessarily limited knowledge of those speaking for them.

Below I identify a number of ways in which carers interacted in the interview situation to contribute towards the presentation of the identity of confused speakers.

‘Answering for’

Carers try to ensure correct answers by using a number of routes. In some instances they effectively put forward the answer themselves. For example:

Extract 10

1. Pam: What have you got in the garden? (1.0) What sorts of flowers?
(3.5)
2. Mrs Pugh: It's er=
3. Mrs James: =Some roses=
4. Mrs Pugh: =Roses=
5. Mrs James: =Fuschias.

Mrs James’s response demonstrates that she has the resource of some particular knowledge of her mother’s life and it can be seen not only as an answer but also as a model for future responses. Indeed, in Utterance 4 Mrs Pugh repeats what her daughter has just said, a repetition that can also be seen as an acknowledgement that the respondent is under some obligation to answer the interviewer herself, even if an answer by another intervenes.

Another type of response is one that reformulates the answer as a sort of narrative at one remove from the confused speaker:

Extract 11

1. Pam: [...] What sorts of roses have you got?
2. Mrs Pugh: Ah all sorts.
3. Mrs James: You've got miniature ones=
4. Mrs Pugh: =Got some miniature ones=
5. Mrs James: You've not got as many as you used to have. You used to have a lot of roses.

In Utterance 2 ‘all sorts’ can be seen as a comprehensive but brief answer that effectively closes down the topic (particularly when Mrs Pugh does not opt to continue her turn at the TRP that follows the word ‘sorts’). In effect, it is an everyperson response to an everyperson question.⁶ Again, a sort of modelling

⁶ It is interesting that everyperson answers to everyperson questions may be seen as evasive – maintaining anonymity in a situation where particularity has been invited.

effect takes place and in Utterance 4 Mrs Pugh once again repeats her daughter's response. Mrs James, however, although not answering in the place of Mrs Pugh, also engages in some topic development on her mother's behalf, reformulating the answer into the second person. And, looking back at Extract 10, it can be seen that even the two one-word responses that Mrs James offers are collectively more than a minimal response: they are the seeds of future topic development, suggesting that she sees the respondent's job of identity work as being about producing more than minimal responses.

In this interview Mrs Pugh's husband and daughter chose mainly to adopt the role of speaking for the confused speaker, and while they developed answers for her or elaborated on her minimal responses they did not greatly facilitate her performance or help her extend it. Significantly, I think, the interview was fairly brief.⁷ It may also be significant that Mrs Pugh appeared to be very unhappy about her identity as a confused speaker: it was, I understand, a fairly new identity for her, and her relatives appeared to have not yet taken on the role of restructuring that identity by means of substantial assistance. The current identity of the confused speaker notwithstanding, the exchanges in this interview suggest that the details of *normal* history and *normal* identity are the salient ones.

Pressing the respondent

A more strenuous example of a carer facilitating identity work can be seen in the case of Mr and Mrs Toll. To illustrate this I want to look again at some lines taken from Extract 2, lines which I have not yet commented on. They are presented below in Extracts 12 and 13 where I have also noted the preceding lines for each:

Extract 12

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| 9. Pam: | Did you have the good weather? |
| 10. Mrs Toll: | Take take your hand down from there. |
| 11. Mr Toll: | ((Takes hand down)). |
| 12. Pam: | Did you have the good weather? = |
| 13. Mr Toll: | =Yeh. |

⁷ Partly because, unlike other carers, Mr Pugh and his daughter did not engage in meta talk about Mrs Pugh's condition.

Extract 13

33. Mr Toll: =Oh with Liz yeh=
34. Mrs Toll: Take your hand off your mouth Jim, we can't hear what you're saying=
35. Mr Toll: ((Takes hand down)).
36. Pam: =Who's Trevor?

We can perhaps interpret these two exchanges as adjacency pairs. Utterances 10 and 34 are first pair part commands which are responded to by Mr Toll taking his hand down from his mouth. So there are, as it were, two non-verbal second pair parts that come into play here (Utterances 11 and 35). The exchanges demonstrate the normative strength of adjacency pairs, as Mrs Toll tries to ensure that Mr Toll is 'fit' to answer the question. In the case of both commands Mrs Toll self-selects to begin the first pair part; both commands ensure that Mr Toll can answer subsequent questions and keep the channels for communication open. Presumably, Mrs Toll also sees her husband's behaviour as potentially offensive, if only at the level that not to produce a second pair part after a first pair part is a noticeable absence. The monitoring and control of someone else's physical management of self is something that we would expect of those in charge of others, indicating that the management of self should be directed to the matter in hand. Since Mr Toll takes his hand down, it can be seen that he perceives Mrs Toll as an appropriate person to make such an utterance and that it is appropriate for him to act on that command. It would not, I think, have been appropriate for me to put forward such a command or even to reinforce it (i.e. 'Yes take your hand down' would have been rude). However, Mr Toll does not take his hand away until his wife has instructed him to do so. Perhaps he does not see his behaviour as potentially offensive. Or, possibly, he wishes to put a smoke-screen over any second pair part he produces (maybe a lack of clarity of speech is a more acceptable form of absence because at least it implies a reply even if it is not audible). Perhaps also, if in doubt, hearers assume that there has been a normal response and that the problem is at their end. The point is that Mrs Toll takes on a controlling role, having established that it is necessary for Mr Toll to be heard in this situation. Rather like a teacher she adopts interactional rights which assume that an unclear answer such as mumbling into one's hand betokens a fault in the production of the answer on the part of the speaker. In all, it is a more explicit direction about how to play the role of interviewee than the modelling work that goes on with carers elsewhere.

Another example of Mrs Toll's monitoring can be seen in the extract below, again taken from Extract 2:

Extract 14

26. Pam: Who did who did you go with?
(3.6)
27. Mr Toll: Went with you didn't I?=
28. Mrs Toll: =Yeh me and who else?
(3.2)
29. Mr Toll: I don't know=
30. Mrs Toll: =Trevor.
(1.0)
31. Mr Toll: Aye Trevor=
32. Mrs Toll: And Liz=
33. Mr Toll: =Oh with Liz yeh=

In this case, Mr Toll does not make a mistake but had he not, in Utterance 27, selected Mrs Toll to speak, there might have been a noticeable absence: after such an event it is possible that whatever happened next would have placed him under greater pressure. Given that he appears to be aware that he cannot ask the interviewer to intervene (since an interviewer could not know the personal details of his life), his choice is to invite his wife to become a respondent too. Mrs Toll then immediately turns herself into a first pair part speaker allocating her husband a very circumscribed set of second pair parts indeed, which confirm information to which I, as an interviewer, have no access. The consequence for Mr Toll is that he is given a hard time: the answer is not just presented to him, he has to work for it. By aligning herself with the role of interviewer, Mrs Toll presses him in his role as respondent. It will be noted that in order to do this Mrs Toll needs to know the details of the holiday. When she asks 'Who else?' (Utterance 28) it is a format that, as interviewer, I could perhaps use since it can be seen as an everyperson question (most people go on holiday with others). However, her next two utterances are the names of the other people who went. She knows when to draw the exchange to a close, something that I could not have known.

Mrs Toll's contribution acknowledges that Mr Toll's repertoire is likely to be limited, even though she pushes him to fulfil more properly the role of an interviewee. We can see that in some respects Mrs Toll's handling of the situation is a rejection of the identity of *confused* for her husband. She attempts to get him to perform *normally*: to be a fit respondent who spells out enough details of his biography to do this. In many respects she is asking him to conform to a number of Grice's maxims in terms of quality, quantity and manner (Grice: 1975). Indeed, her formulations in Extract 14 almost suggest that she is *making* Mr Toll co-operate.

Reformulation

Another option chosen by one carer was extensively to reformulate my questions in such a way as to present biographical details of his wife's life within his questions. This pattern links with topic management: a prior statement was translated into a different sort of format that could be followed by a speaker who was unable or unwilling to engage with the current format. Such reformulation alters the talk to maintain coherence and topic. It would have been perfectly feasible for the carer in question, Mr Hoy, just to answer my questions *for* Mrs Hoy. However, usually he established a situation which was a continuation of an interview with its question and answer format framing questions in such a way as to enable Mrs Hoy to take part. Mr Hoy played a very vigorous role in the development of a conversation, and it was one which took place 'as if' between normal speakers. The work that he did in his participation in the conversation was almost preventive, being so well organised as to avoid remedial work ever having to take place. Indeed, when remedial work did take place it tended to be Mr Hoy's corrections or amplifications of *what I said* (presumably perceived by him as far too complicated) so that his wife's responses could be maintained as per normal.

The device of conditional relevance was exploited by Mr Hoy to develop a form of talk with his wife that 'passed' her as normal in the conversation. A substantial portion of this interview consisted of questions of a kind that had a very high expectation of a specific type of answer. In fact, there was often a cumulative structure, as the following sequence shows; and this cumulative structure was largely due to 'stage management' on the part of Mr Hoy. The extract includes an initial question by me:

Extract 15

1. Pam:

What were what were the names of your brothers? (5.2) Can't remember?
2. Mr Hoy:

There were (Simon) weren't there?=
=Yeh=
=Jack=
=Yeh=
=And Nigel
(.)
3. Mrs Hoy:
4. Mr Hoy:
5. Mrs Hoy:
6. Mr Hoy:
7. Mrs Hoy:

Yeh
[
Weren't there?
(1.0)
8. Mr Hoy:
9. Mrs Hoy:

Yeh.

In this sequence, after my initial question to Mrs Hoy (Utterance 1), Mr Hoy self-selects to take next turn. But note that he does this following a turn

involving a lengthy pause after which I put a second question, offering a let out. But a noticeable absence has been generated. A noticeable absence has some influence on turn taking rules and gives other speakers the right to enter the conversation (because they can give the answer, maintain the topic or cover over any state of embarrassment). With his next two utterances (4 and 6) Mr Hoy says the names of two of the three brothers; these are statements in Goffman's terms (Goffman: 1981). Finally he repeats part of his original first pair part (Utterance 8 repeats part of Utterance 2). In their placement both 'weren't there?' questions can be seen as tag questions: questions commonly connected with the end of a turn and which act to select the next speaker (Levinson 1983: 298). Like yes/no questions, tag questions require answers which are limited to confirming the previous assertion. In the case of this sequence, the answer to the original question can only have a limited number of components, the brothers' names. One can expect people to have a small enough number of brothers to be able to name them (it is not like being asked 'What were the names of the people who attended the cup final?'): thus the first pair part in Utterance 1 indicates the expectation of a limited answer.

Such sequences read more like a cross examination than part of a casual conversation or an ethnographic interview because they are highly repetitive. If the minimally active confused speaker is forever replying 'yes', then roughly half the turns will be repetitive and the variety that locally managed conversation involves will be lost. The strategy also breaks down into the smallest available turn sizes what otherwise might have been one second pair part ('Who were your three brothers?': 'Simon, Jack and Nigel'). Again, the normal speaker develops the topic by translating the talk into an interview format. The extract has similarities with the elicitation of answers from a class of children (Mehan: 1986). The questions are posed in such a way as almost to eradicate the possibility of Mrs Hoy getting anything wrong. Mr Hoy can be seen to present first pair parts that are elicitations and which require only acknowledgements. He produces a series of single word statements each of which could be seen as an answer to the original question. The overall effect is to generate a multiple-turn answer. And, because Mrs Hoy acknowledges each statement, she is an accomplice. So, after intervening, Mr Hoy effectively settles the talk down into a two-way conversation. During the course of the interview, attempts that I made to establish two-way communication with Mrs Hoy were often cleverly pre-empted by means of this intervention strategy by Mr Hoy. For example:

Extract 16

- Pam: What else do you do here when you come here (.) at this day centre?=
 Mr Hoy: =Shouts bingo numbers out don't you?
 (.)
 Mrs Hoy: Yes=
 Mr Hoy: And she makes things.
 (.)
 Mrs Hoy: Yeh.
 Pam: What sorts of things do you make?
 (2.5)
 Mr Hoy: Makes some lovely things don't you? Pictures don't you?

The assumption or rule here is that the first pair part has to be of a very specific type to permit Mrs Hoy to participate competently by contributing a second pair part. The initial intervention here is more prompt than in Extract 15: its promptness suggests it is a device to avoid a noticeable absence. If Mrs Hoy is offered very few or no alternatives she can participate. In the examples above the first pair part, with its tag question indicates a very tightly defined answer as in 'didn't you?', 'weren't there?', 'don't you?' This strategy combines controlled turn allocation with very consistent first pair parts. Little varies in the formula over long stretches of the conversation. Yet by these means a story is told for Mrs Hoy with her complicity.

Another way in which Mr Hoy accomplishes the 'passing' of his wife in the conversation is to intervene with very strongly recipient-designed questions:

Extract 17

- Pam: What do you listen to?
 (2.7)
 Mr Hoy: You like Foster and Allen don't you?
 (.)
 Mrs Hoy: Yeh=

The intervention that Mr Hoy makes has the particular characteristic that it is a question specifically designed for Mrs Hoy. Conversation analysts suggest that all talk involves what Sacks et al. call *recipient design*:

[...] the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are co-participants. In our work we have found recipient design to operate with regard to word selection, topic selection, the admissibility and ordering of sequences, the options and obligations for starting and terminating conversations and so on [...]

(Sacks et al. 1978: 43)

Thus, the notion of recipient design defines a situation where speakers frame their utterance so as to be appropriate for certain aspects of the context, especially for who the other participants are and what they have just said

(Sacks and Schegloff: 1973). Recipient design is important in talk involving confused speakers, and particularly so with minimally active speakers: the extent of its use can mean the difference between them passing as members in the conversation or being seen as incompetent. Such recipient design is not merely to suit the listener but to ensure that some interaction does take place. Mr Hoy designs his questions explicitly for his wife. They contain the answer so that an appropriate second pair part for Mrs Hoy is just 'yes'. In Extract 17 my question is recipient designed too, but it does not turn out to be appropriately designed for Mrs Hoy. Successful recipient design for Mrs Hoy, apparently involves not only the direct address to her ('you') but also a specification of the complete answer to the question within the question itself. In Goody's terms this is the presentation of a proposition in its original form (Goody: 1978). The framing of the interrogative is done as a tag question; and it occurs at the *end* of the turn thus minimising the chance that Mrs Hoy will have forgotten that a question is being asked. Indeed, we can even suggest that as long as Mrs Hoy can participate to the extent of saying 'yes' to the tag question 'wasn't it?', she needs no other resources to be able to participate.

Recipient design as practised by Mr Hoy almost pre-empts the need for repair work. The reiteration of the second pair part as 'yes' also provides a model for me as to how to structure future first pair parts i.e. put everything that has to be said into them in an order that ensures the greatest chance of 'yes' being the utterance chosen by the confused speaker (an expedient that Mrs Toll also adopts).⁸ This strategy takes various guises. Sometimes it is a take-over of the interviewer's initial question, a sort of re-run of the first pair part involving very precise recipient design. And the recipient design *looks both ways*. It reformulates my first pair part, reducing it to a size and scope that can be answered by 'yes' (i.e. it assumes that there is only one category or type connected answer at which Mrs Hoy is efficient) and at the same time it acts as a second pair part to my original question. So a sort of chain is developed:

Pam:	Question (first pair part)
Mr Hoy:	Answer (second pair part) as question (first pair part)
Mrs Hoy:	Answer (second pair part)

The fact that this recipient design strategy looks both ways is sometimes made explicit, as in the following example:

⁸ It is interesting that in the latter part of the interview I adopted this strategy quite frequently!

the biography and the capabilities of the respondent in order for a narrative to be developed.

Mr Hoy's substantial interventions which seemed designed to pass Mrs Hoy off as normal in the conversation can be seen as a structured way of helping her (and him) to avoid loss of face. He is assisted in his task by Mrs Hoy's compliance: she is still to be relied on to present a second pair part for each first pair part. Equally important, by restricting herself to minimal second pair parts she avoids potential danger. Were she to engage in some topic development herself the carefully built edifice might come tumbling down. The problematic topic developments, evidenced in Extracts 4 and 5, illustrate this. However, this adds up to a presentation of Mrs Hoy's self which is managed more by her husband than it is by her. And, the fact that the biography has to be constructed by someone else in her presence, of course, undermines it as a successful personal biography, (although another reading of this situation is that Mr Hoy construes himself and his wife as 'we' in this situation and not as himself representing her).⁹

As I have demonstrated, Mr Hoy manages his wife's conversational interactions very tightly. He presents elicitations and she acknowledges them. As far as the substance of these conversational interactions is concerned, although she almost always only acknowledges what he says, her world is presented to her (and to me) as one in which she has a positive degree of participation, a world, in fact, upon which she acts; as this extended version of Extract 16 shows:

Extract 20

- Pam: What else do you do here when you come here (.) at this day centre?=
 Mr Hoy: =Shouts bingo numbers out don't you?
 (.)
 Mrs Hoy: Yes=
 Mr Hoy: And she makes things.
 (.)
 Mrs Hoy: Yeh.
 Pam: What sorts of things do you make?
 (2.5)
 Mr Hoy: Makes some lovely things don't you? Pictures don't you?
 Mrs Hoy: ((Whisper)) Yeh.
 Pam: Oh and things like cards=
 Mr Hoy: =Yeh.
 [[
 Mrs Hoy: =Yeh.

⁹ This is a reading incidentally which can be seen to fit some of the creative turn-taking I discussed earlier in this chapter.

Pam: Birthday cards and=
 Mrs Hoy: =Yeh=
 (.)
 Mr Hoy: She made a Valentine card for me didn't you?
 Mrs Hoy: Ye:s.

So now we have two strata of 'as ifs'. Firstly, Mr Hoy has constructed the conversation as if his wife were participating as a normal participant and, secondly, he has constructed an agenda of events and activities which demonstrate that she does indeed take part normally in everyday life. And the following extract suggests a further aspect of the presentation of her 'self':

Extract 21

Mr Hoy: You just imagine people like Maisie if I just sat her in a chair at home after I got her ready in the morning.
 Pam: Yes.
 Mr Hoy: It must be a long day for some people.
 Pam: Yes yes.
 Mr Hoy: I always make it you know I put her in the chair.
 Pam: Yeh.
 Mr Hoy: As I say when I () do jobs I put her a record on I always put a record or the radio.
 Pam: Mmm.
 Mr Hoy: She'll sit and listen while I do all.
 Pam: Yeh.
 Mr Hoy: As soon as I've done my work I put the dinner on and I take her a walk out to the shops don't I?
 Mrs Hoy: Yes.
 Mr Hoy: We go a nice walk round.
 Pam: Mm.
 Mrs Hoy: Yeh.
 Mr Hoy: Then er have a quiet afternoon and then if the weather's nice I take her another walk out at night she loves to go a walk round.

Mr Hoy reports how he has constructed for his wife a daily round that assumes her participation as a normal person, including her need for stimulus like anyone else. He has projected a continuation of the old Maisie into the current Maisie. Some of the literature on Alzheimer's Disease remarks on the fact that it is very common for carers to suggest that the dementing person no longer has their real identity:

She's not the person I married: she looks much the same, but she's different person now. In one sense she's dead already – but still here in another.

(Alzheimer's Disease Society: 1989)

Carers may well mourn for the person who has gone away before they actually die, even while he or she continues to live in physical terms (Alzheimer's Disease Society: 1989). What seems to be involved here is that the presentation of self of the person with Alzheimer's has so little consistency with their presentation of self down through the years that the effort to maintain the sense of the continuity of self ceases to be worthwhile.

Identity is lost or it becomes inconvenient for other people and challenges their own identities. This does not seem to be the case with Mr Hoy, however, who skilfully stage manages the situation to present his wife as a person who is still *as normal*. Mrs Hoy obligingly presents no information to the contrary. This double act is accomplished in an environment which is not in itself 'quite normal'. My interviews are 'a bit odd', but even so Mr and Mrs Hoy present a joint performance in which she is constructed as a participating member. Furthermore (and my biographical approach may have emphasised this) Mrs Hoy is given a normal past too, which is connected to a normal present by continuing preferences (one of the staples of identity): 'she has always enjoyed going for walks' and so on.

Problematizing identity

My final case of identity work relating to minimally active confused speakers involves Barry and Edith. It seems to me that here some rather different identity work is being done from the cases I have discussed so far, where normal identity was being oriented to.

In the interview Barry takes over the role of being the person who speaks to Edith very early on. In fact, he intervenes to take a turn directly after my first (recorded) question to Edith. He then sets up a series of biographical questions which he expects Edith to be able to answer ('normally she'd be able to answer this'):

Extract 22

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Barry: | Where were you born [...] Was it in Coventry? |
| Edith: | Yes |
| [...] | |
| Barry: | Who's Tottie then? |
| Edith: | Ma mi mother. |
| Barry: | Oh that's your mother is it? |
| Edith: | Yes. |
| [...] | |
| Barry: | What's your father's name? |
| Edith: | My father's Baines. |

This sequence (of which there are many similar ones in this interview) is comparable to what Dunn refers to as training questions:

Dunn [...] reports that in some middle class families almost everything parents say to children from about twelve months to two or three years is turned into a question. She calls these training questions, as they are not about the child's wishes and feelings but rather set problems.

(Goody 1978: 25)

In this case the *set problem* has a wider reference which is Barry's attempt to demonstrate to me the degree of recall that Edith has. Of course, this says

something about what he sees my interests as being. In Extract 22 most of Barry's questions are of the everyperson variety suggesting that in his structuring of questions he has almost taken on the role of an interviewer unfamiliar with the interviewee. He disengages himself from his personal knowledge of Edith's history. Compare this with how Mr Hoy might have formulated a couple of the questions in Extract 22:

You were born in Coventry, weren't you?

Your father's name was Baines, wasn't it?

The tag questions that Mr Hoy uses not only give firm directions to his wife, they express a familiarity with the facts of her biography. Within a family one would not normally expect people to use everyperson questions, it has a touch of the breaching experiment about it (Garfinkel: 1967). Indeed part of the work of family members is to position themselves as exactly this, as people who are familiar with the life of this member. Everyperson questions are a correct formulation for an interviewer but could be seen as inappropriate for a relative.

A more pronounced example of Barry distancing of himself from his role as a person familiar with Edith is shown in the following extract:

Extract 23

Barry: Yes how old are you then now?=
=Me?=
Barry: Mmm=
Edith: =(How do you know?)
Barry: Well how old are you?
Edith: Ye do ye d I don't know that.
Barry: You don't know who am I then?
Edith: (Em) (2.7) ((Mutters))
(2.0)
Barry: Who am I then?
Edith: Aye?
Barry: ((Low)) Who am I?
(2.0)
Edith: You like it.
Barry: I like it but who am I?
(11.9)
Pam: I think perhaps [...]

As an interaction among intimates, this is very difficult to normalise. It perhaps could be one where a parent had dressed up and was trying to get a child to say who they thought the character was or something like that. But otherwise it places Barry in the situation of apparently not knowing something that people are generally expected to know: who they are. And all this is to the purpose of demonstrating that Edith does not know people who she should know. Unlike Mr Hoy, Barry does not always steer clear of

questions that he knows that Edith cannot answer. At some points in the interview he asks her questions which she answers incorrectly. For example, he asks if she is married and she says 'No', if she has any children to which she replies 'Yes', and then eight utterances later he asks her again and this time she says 'No'. In his commentary to me Barry says 'Some days I'm her son Barry, some days I'm Uncle Bill, some days I'm her father, some days she doesn't know me at all.' And presumably some of Barry's lines of questioning are deliberately intended to demonstrate what he already knows: that there are defects in Edith's ability to present her biography. However, it is interesting to note the Catch 22 situation that confused speakers often appear to find themselves in: that questions are asked of them that sometimes fly in the face of context. For a mother to be quizzed by her son about her family is a rather peculiar situation. And yet here, because she is a confused speaker, no one feels that they have to account for this oddity.

Although Barry is prepared to expose deficits in Edith's knowledge that are material to her identity, this is not an all or nothing strategy. He also constructs questions which ensure a good chance of Edith successfully answering them, and he comments on her successful presentation of biography and identity, as this next extract shows:

Extract 24

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1. Barry: | What's Grandad's name? (2.3) What's your father's name? |
| 2. Edith: | My father's, my father's Baines. |
| 3. Barry: | Baines is it? (2.4) <i>You know that do you?</i> = |
| 4. Edith: | =Yes= |
| 5. Barry: | =What's his name what's his Christian name?=
=He'd give you a fight= |
| 6. Edith: | |
| 7. Barry: | He'd give you a fight would he? <i>You can remember that can you?</i> = |
| 8. Edith: | =Yes= |
| 9. Barry: | =What's your father's name? |
| 10. Edith: | ((Mutters)) Mi dad= |
| 11. Barry: | =What's your dad's name?=
=((Mutters)) |
| 12. Edith: | |
| 13. Barry: | What's your dad's name? |
| 14. Edith: | My dad's? |
| 15. Barry: | Yeh. |
| 16. Edith: | Baines. |
| 17. Barry: | <i>Do you remember that?</i> = |
| 18. Edith: | =Yeh. |
| 19. Barry: | What did your dad do? |
| 20. Edith: | ((Mutters)) |
| 21. Barry: | Was he in the army was he an army man?=
=Yes he is= |
| 22. Edith: | |

23. Barry: He's in the army is he? What did he used to do in the army?=
 24. Edith: =In the army he was a soldier=
 25. Barry: =He was a soldier was he?
 (1.2)
 26. Edith: Yeh (2.7) Didn't you know that?

In asking whether Edith's father was in the army we can suppose that this question implies that he *was* in the army (it is unlikely that the questioner would have asked a series of random questions about possible occupations). The question being engineered in this way thus gives Edith the chance to answer minimally and correctly. In his questioning Barry also draws attention to Edith's competence in presenting her biography. In the extract above, I have italicised comments in Utterances 3, 7 and 17 which focus on her knowledge and memory. Such remarks appear to commend Edith for these abilities: as if to say 'I wouldn't have expected you to know/remember that'. Yet, biographical resources are available to *all* ordinary members. In talking with others we can assume that we and they have in common *access* to details of biography: but this common access is not generally mentionable. I suspect that in normal circumstances people make comments like Barry's only when a memory feat is prodigious or unexpected. In commending Edith for being able to remember ordinary things Barry marks out generally unmentioned aspects of what is considered to be ordinary competence, making them remarkable and drawing attention to the fact that when Edith does something ordinary and competent it is worthy of attention.

Members also need to identify the particularising features of biographies that are not part of a common stock of knowledge available to all members and to recognise members for whom they are unlikely to be common knowledge. So it is worth mentioning that Barry is not always responsible for talk sequences that show Edith's biography to be problematic. It is something that she can also demonstrate unsolicited. In Extract 23, Utterance 26, where Edith expresses some incredulity that Barry may not know a fact that has just been mentioned, one interpretation is that she might be seen to be contesting the distanced persona that her son has developed. It is not clear whether she asks this question because she thinks Barry, as her son, should know the answer, or whether she thinks everyone should know.¹⁰ On another occasion she asks me a similar question:

¹⁰ This is, again, almost like Garfinkel's breaching experiments where students were asked to behave like lodgers and where family members became suspicious or cross or both (Garfinkel: 1967).

Extract 25

Pam: Where is the (.) you don't know where the farm is now?=
 Edith: =No=
 Pam: =No=
 Edith: =You don't know?=
 Pam: =I don't know where it is either no [...]

People need to understand that their particularised biography will come as news to some people and the two examples above may suggest that Edith is not aware of which categories of people will find aspects of her biography news. Indeed, we might say that if she is not always aware that her son is her son that the issue of what comes as news to whom must be, for her, a very complicated one. On the other hand, if she does not know whether she knows people, perhaps the issue of 'news' has ceased to be an issue for her at all.

In his interviewing, then, Barry does not present his mother entirely 'as if' everything were normal. He pays attention to problematising the identity. His representation of the situation is that it is like being with a baby:

Extract 26

Pam: What sort of conversational strategies do you try to actually keep it going?
 Barry: Light conversation obviously (6.0) It's difficult to say really baby talk I would say actually. You relate back to baby talk [...] I think what you do is go back to being in a baby situation, having a baby situation that's what you go back to because that's what they understand.

He has therefore found an identity for his mother to which he can relate. Nevertheless within this wider context of the 'baby situation' he does distinguish between his mother in the situation of being interviewed and *normally*. Her presentation of self is not constant, it varies during the course of the day. To demonstrate this he asks his mother a lot of training type questions and often finishes a sequence with 'Normally she'd just have it straight off', 'Normally she'd know all this straight off because this is the era'. He insists that she is at her worst now, in the morning (when the interview is taking place). So even though he problematises her identity, largely through setting up her defective presentation of biography, he still makes claims for her being *more normal* some of the time.

Conclusion

Confused speakers vary in the degree to which they participate in social interaction, and in this chapter I have focused on a group of confused speakers I refer to as minimally active. I suggested that the presentation of the self of these speakers was to a great extent shaped by the interplay between the requirements of the interview situation, my use of the

everyperson question format, and the development of particularistic biographies (often supplied by carers).

I argued that minimally active confused speakers do acknowledge TRPs, and respond and speak when selected. However, their contributions are usually very brief: they tend to take fewer turns than might be expected and to use shorter turn construction units than the context demands. Frequent minimal answers in an open-ended interview situation can be seen to demonstrate a minimal obligation to the conversation and a lack of context awareness.

Moreover, minimalism of this kind has implications for topic management. Minimally active confused speakers do only a very limited amount of work in keeping conversations going. Normal speakers therefore find ways of maintaining the social occasion. This almost inevitably involves them in speaking for minimally active confused speakers, correcting, prompting or modelling what they take to be appropriate answers. Alternatively and equally consequential for face they may press respondents for a more proper rendition of this role. They may speak to the confused speakers reformulating my questions as interviewer or generating new questions that can be answered minimally by the confused speaker. Finally they may use the interview situation to problematise the identity of the confused speaker. Thus the deficits in the knowledge of minimally active confused speakers are manipulated in various ways by carers to present carefully constructed identities of the confused speaker and of themselves.

The primary requirement for the interviewees at these interviews was to be able to give some account of their own history. However, recounting one's past is a matter of competence which, of course, can also be seen as a reflection of current competence in responding to occasion. A biography needs to be topically unfolded in a way that is appropriate to the occasion and for the person one is presenting oneself as. Particulars need to be filled in and to have some consistency within an everyperson framework. That is to say, biographical markers need to conform to what people recognise as possibilities for a viable biography. As Atkinson points out, you need the template of birth, school, marriage and so on to begin to measure individuals

against: the term 'a late marriage' can only be understood if we understand at what ages marriages generally take place (Atkinson 1973: 99).¹¹

In most of the cases I have discussed in this chapter, the evidence of incompetence in terms of biography is demonstrated not by what is said but by who says it. The template of an ordinary biography has been maintained, but usually only by carer intervention. This raises the question of the extent to which the biography and identity of a confused speaker can be seen to be competent if they are constantly being developed and adjusted by carers and normal speakers. One must be seen to be in charge of one's biography and identity: it comes with the territory of being an ordinary member. Common-sense practical reasoning is based on people having agency and position in the social world, and biography and identity are accounts of such agency and position. While not being in charge of one's identity and biography may be seen not to be one's fault, it leaves one without much currency to be able to do social intercourse.

The thrust of the chapter has been to emphasise the ambiguities of the identity of minimally active confused speakers, and the extent to which these are orchestrated by normal speakers. They may be presented as competent through the work of others. One example of this is that when normal speakers make questions closed rather than open minimally active confused speakers have a better chance of participating in the conversation. But, of course, the fact that normal speakers should have to use such tactics betrays the incompetence of the confused speakers. Such work by normal speakers could be seen to imply that although the confused speakers are found wanting, the failing should not count against them. But the failings are of such a kind as to leave the confused speaker with little remainder as a person.

¹¹ But it needs also to be the biography required for the occasion. In Equal Opportunities Interviews aspects of personal biographies are not only not required, they are actively suppressed.

Chapter 5

Moderately active confused speakers

Whatever you may think about what it is to be an ordinary person in the world, an initial shift is not think of "an ordinary person" as some person, but as somebody having as one's job, as one's constant preoccupation, doing "being ordinary." [...] a job that persons and the people around them may be coordinatively engaged in, to achieve that each of them, together, are ordinary persons.

(Sacks 1984: 414-415)

As Sacks makes clear, in an important respect 'being ordinary' is a job of work that people engage in on a daily basis. Furthermore, most of them have no difficulty with this task much of the time. By contrast, as I have shown, minimally active confused speakers seem to have renounced any attempt at 'being ordinary'. Other confused speakers seem more aware of and committed to the achievement of normal interactional appearances. Included among these are those I will refer to in this thesis as moderately active confused speakers. What I mean by this is that they often respond with turns longer than one word, frequently of one or more sentences; they seek clarification and self-select to take turn upon occasion; and finally, there are indications that some of them, at least, are well aware of the shortcomings of their conversational participation. Yet, paradoxically, because they take more part in conversations and therefore 'expose' themselves to a greater extent, there are respects in which these conversationalists appear to be less successful than minimally active confused speakers.

In this chapter I examine interviews with four speakers who are moderately active in their talk. I interviewed three of these speakers: Mrs Inman had been diagnosed as suffering from confusion some time ago and was accompanied by her daughter, Mrs Grace. Mrs Whittaker, also accompanied by her daughter, Mrs Becker, was 92 and had been referred because of suspected confusion and tinnitus. Mrs Bowles, again diagnosed as confused some time ago was accompanied by her son. I will also look at some aspects of Tom's interview with Mr Graham. Mr Graham was interviewed in the presence of his wife who occasionally intervened and was also invited to speak at some points in the interview.

Ordinary talk

If we look at the patterns of participation of these moderately active confused speakers we see that they are very different from those of minimally active confused speakers. Figure 5.1, below provides information about relative

lengths of turns. To these speakers often took more turns in the conversation overall than the minimally active speakers. For example, Mrs Whittaker took 190 turns in a conversation of 435 turns (44 per cent) and Mrs Inman took 105 out of a total of 235 turns (45 per cent). Mrs Bowles only took 170 out of 630 turns (27 per cent) but a substantial amount of the conversation involved her son talking about himself and she made little input to this talk. Likewise, in Tom’s interview Mrs Graham was invited to speak at length.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of turns taken¹

	Inman	Whittaker	Bowles	Graham
No. of turns	105	190	170	34
Word	33%	35%	23%	9%
Phrase	10%	12%	10%	9%
Clause	8%	3%	7%	6%
Sentence	32%	30%	24%	24%
> Sentence	15%	16%	36%	53%
Other		4%		

To take the example of Mrs Inman, nearly half her turns were a sentence or longer, and about two thirds of her turns were more than a minimal one word answer. Figure 5.1 shows that moderately active confused speakers use a variety of turn lengths which consistently are longer than those of minimally active confused speakers, routinely producing utterances of longer than a sentence and thus demonstrating that they can hold on to the talk through TRPs. For example:

Extract 1

1. Mrs Whittaker:

2. Daughter:

3. Mrs Whittaker:

4. Pam:

5. Mrs Whittaker:

6. Pam:

7. Mrs Whittaker:

8. Pam:
- Yes I love whist.

How much do you win?

Oh about a pound.

Really? Is that playing for pennies?

You pay thirty p for your game.

Ah ah right so you win.

[

You can get first half ladies or second half ladies=

=Right=

¹I have not included the groanings that Mr Graham uttered at points when Tom was talking to Mrs Graham, categorising them as utterances away from turn.

9. Mrs Whittaker = And you get a pound if you get=
 10. Pam: [the lot.
 11. Mrs Whittaker: = The highest number.
 12. Pam: Yes oh that's very good 'cos I play I play bridge but for pennies=
 13. Mrs Whittaker: =That's a thing I'd love to do.

Here we see Mrs Whittaker (in an ordinary member's judgement probably the least confused speaker of all those interviewed) answering questions, that is, dealing adequately with second pair parts, taking turn at TRPs, answering according to the project of the question (Sacks 1995a: 56); and, in the case of Utterances 12 and 13, developing a relevant adjacent reply to a statement (Goffman, 1981: 13). She answers my questions to provide some account of herself which is greater than the 'yes' that would be literally acceptable on the basis of the questions. In short, there is nothing remarkable about this extract of talk; it is a perfectly ordinary interchange and is one of many in this conversation. Mrs Bowles also produces talk which is normal in these respects:

Extract 2

- Mrs Bowles: Yes, mi dad he was an onsetter he worked at the pit but he didn't cut the coal he was on the=
 [Pam: Right.
 Mrs Bowles: =Chair on the cage to see the men got on and=
 [Pam: Up and down.
 Mrs Bowles: Exactly, that's right yes.

Here Mrs Bowles holds her turn through two interventions by me, producing a recipient-designed response to my second intervention accommodating the fact that I have inserted a correct and appropriate ending to her account of the pit cages.

However, despite its structural normality, much of the talk of moderately active confused speakers nevertheless comes over, in various ways, as confused rather than normal. In this chapter I want to explicate what it is about their talk that leads to this impression. Any conversation may have moments in it when there are confusions: what is characteristic of ordinary conversation is not that everyone always gets it right but that when it goes wrong it is adequately repaired. In some of the data to be discussed in this chapter, however, the confusions tend to happen on a grand scale and in situations which would not, in normal circumstances, give rise to confusion. Moreover, a substantial amount of repair work done by the confused speakers is inadequate. I would suggest that there are requirements for normal interactional appearances other than the structural normality of talk.

We can understand what some of these other requirements for normal interaction are by looking again at Grice's co-operative principle.

Co-operation in conversation

In Chapter 1 I outlined the basic points of Grice's co-operative principle and its four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner. Grice goes on to present, by means of analogies, some of the requirements for co-operation (Grice 1975: 47). For example, in relation to *quantity*, he notes that in mending a car the mechanic expects the helper to contribute four screws at the appropriate stage, not six or two. In relation to *quality*, contributions should be genuine, a spoon given to someone making a cake should be real and not rubber. In regard to *relation*, the contribution should be appropriate to the immediate needs of that particular stage of the transaction: if one is mixing the ingredients of a cake one does not expect to be handed a good book. Finally, in regard to *manner*, the partner should make clear 'what contribution he is making, and [...] execute his performance with reasonable dispatch' (1975: 47).

Applying Grice's maxims to the interview situation we can suggest that in relation to quantity the interviewer might expect, upon asking an open probing question, to receive a fairly full answer, not a half hour monologue, on the one hand or a single word reply, on the other. Correspondingly, in relation to quality, an interviewer might expect a straight answer to a question and not a riddle. The interviewer expects the answer which is given either to be relevant to the question that has just been asked, or to otherwise show some demonstrated relevance to an earlier part of the conversation. Finally, in relation to manner (which can be considered the *how* of conversation), the interviewer might expect the respondent to reply promptly, not to hesitate unduly, to remain seated rather than standing and not to groan, etc.

Any departure from the normal conditions of the co-operative principle may be seen as some kind of breach of that principle. Of course, we expect breaches in any conversation. However, what we also expect, on the whole, is that these breaches will be self-corrected or repaired in some way. But, in order for this to happen a participant must be aware of the normal proprieties as laid out in the conversational maxims.

19. Pam: =Oh I see.
 [
20. Mrs Bowles: But being an only child [...]

Because I have been referring to other day centres in my question in Utterance 1 I am assuming that any answer will be within this frame of reference. It is only in Utterance 20 that it starts to become clear that Mrs Bowles is, in fact, talking about 'the welfare' in her village when she was a child ('an only child' being a descriptor generally tied to the events of one's childhood). Mrs Bowles is moving to a different stage in her biography without due referencing. 'At home' in Utterance 16 seems a key phrase which requires me to understand that this was the home of her childhood rather than 'When I was at home' in the sense of last weekend. And this raises the question of relevance. Perhaps we could say, in terms of conversation analysis, that we would expect the production of some kind of utterance which indicates a gear shift to a different range of knowledge (i.e. to mark that she has gone beyond the context offered by my questions but that there is a link). In Sperber and Wilson's terms (1986), possibly, she has not articulated the process of moving to what they call encyclopaedic knowledge to answer a question. Moving to encyclopaedic knowledge must necessarily be referenced in order to remain relevant. Indeed, there may be sanctions against this move as, for example, when people complain that someone is bringing up stories from their lives inappropriately.

The structure of an everyperson biography offered by the interviewer provides a broad context for appropriate relevant responses. This is perhaps more structured and offers more clues to the hearer than might, at first, seem to be the case. For example, in none of my interviews, including this one, did I pursue a biography from the person's current life and work backwards. (Extract 3, above, which posed questions about Mrs Bowles's current life took place very near the end of the interview.) The order was chronological, as commonly understood, a developmental approach: born, brought up, school, work, marriage, children, moving and so on. Within this framework people may reasonably suppose that after questions about where they were born they will be asked questions about their young life. Conversely if they are asked questions about their recent biography, for example in the case of the discussion with Mrs Bowles about which day centres she attends, we can expect that they must justify introducing other more distant aspects of their biography.

Extract 3 is not the only occasion when I had problems with Mrs Bowles's handling of biography:

Extract 4

1. Pam: So your family was a a mining family=
2. Mrs Bowles: =Yes=
3. Pam: =Ah ah and did
[
4. Mrs Bowles: But I was a lone girl they hadn't any children at all=
5. Pam: =Who didn't?
6. Mrs Bowles: =I always called them dad and mum I always called them mum and dad=
7. Pam: =Yes=
8. Mrs Bowles: =And previous to that I wa they adopted me you see.

In this extract Mrs Bowles presents her story in such a way as to create a problem for the listener. One possible inference from Utterance 4 is that the 'they' she refers to were her parents and if so, the utterance does not seem to make any sense. Mrs Bowles appears to have violated the maxim of manner, specifically the sub maxim 'Be orderly'. She opens up the possibility of a biographical fact that is unusual, that of being orphaned, but in such a manner as not to prepare but to confuse the hearer. Her construction of a biography at this point, far from answering the interviewer's questions without problems, is likely to require other questions to get this all sorted out.

Unfolding a chronology in an order which might present problems for listeners is something that anyone might do. However, what we would expect to happen in such circumstances is that they would, in the interests of co-operation, correct the confusion. But Mrs Bowles does not appear to have any awareness of the problem she has created for at least one listener (the interviewer).² If, in such circumstances, the teller does not show awareness of the breach then we would expect one of the listeners to correct or to ask for clarification. Here I seek clarification (and the tone of my voice is quite mystified in Utterance 5). But her response does not seem to acknowledge the significance of the question and she continues to unfold the biography in her own chosen order, where adoption is a punch line rather than a prior contextual requirement.

² It seems likely that her son would know she had been adopted and so for him the chronology as unfolded would not presumably pose such problems. This would seem to be an indication of the context-sensitivity of the maxim of manner – that orderliness is required to accommodate to the hearers.

The following extract is taken from Tom's conversation with Mr Graham and demonstrates accidental breaches in a situation where the questions are much more tightly structured:

Extract 5

1. Tom: Can I ask you do you know what (.) what time of the year it is now?
(3.6)
2. Mr Graham: What do you mean er months?=
3. Tom: Su summer or winter or autumn?
4. Mr Graham: Well I I say it's (.) anticipating the spring.
5. Tom: Right that's it, yes do you know what month it is?
6. Mr Graham: Yes er er er second month Jan *February*.
7. Tom: That's right and do you know can you remember the date that it is today?
8. Mr Graham: ((Coughs)) The date it is ((Coughs)) today somewhere about (.) 20th init Lily or something?
9. Tom: Yes, it's a bit later than that, it's the 26th I think=
10. Mr Graham: =Oh the 26th yes=
11. Tom: What about the day of the week do you know what day it is?=
12. Mr Graham: =This yeh it's Friday isn't?=
13. Tom: Well that's near enough it's Thursday today=
14. Mr Graham: =Oh Thursday=
15. Tom: =But that's pretty good really.

In this extract Tom asks a number of questions that can be seen to be intended to examine Mr Graham's awareness of the here and now: about time, season, month, date and day. Such formulations are common in assessments for people with mental health problems, where getting answers right is treated as a display of normality. These correct answers are knowledge which is publicly available to all ordinary members. To get them wrong is immediately to expose oneself as not normal in some sense; even though 'normal' members might sometimes have difficulties with them.

In some respects Mr Graham can be seen to respond co-operatively. He asks a relevant question (Utterance 2) in order to check, presumably, that he can give a true answer to Tom's question (maxim of quality). In terms of the maxim of quality more generally, Mr Graham qualifies two of his answers with tag questions (Utterances 8 and 12) in such a way as to disclaim certain knowledge. That is to say, he suggests that he thinks these answers are true but alerts the other speaker to the fact that he may be wrong and that he is open to correction. Both these qualifiers might also be seen as acknowledging his own role in answering test questions. In each instance Mr Graham's response is as informative as required, providing an answer and on two occasions setting that information against the maxim of quality (Utterances 8 and 12). However, his reply in Utterance 2 'anticipating the spring' could be said to cause problems in relation to the maxim of manner, in that it

introduces an unwarranted element of obscurity into the conversation. While correct, the use of poetic rather than precise terms, given the testing nature of the questions, might be seen to be inappropriate. Overall, Mr Graham appears to be trying to behave co-operatively in the conversation but simply cannot reliably supply the information that people are assumed to have about ordinary but key matters in everyday life. In this light, it is interesting that in Utterances 10 and 14 the tone of Mr Graham's voice is rather similar to the tone people adopt when they have got the wrong answer in a quiz – a sort of 'Oh I should have known that, I could kick myself' tone. Such a tone might be appropriate and face saving when one fails to answer a question in a quiz about the protagonists in the Hundred Years War: indeed, the tone implies 'I knew that really'. However, the stance is not one generally to be expected when talking about what today's date is.

In the examples I have discussed so far I have implied that interactional problems may arise for the participants from accidental breaches of the co-operative principle. Above all, issues of face may arise. A number of authors have made links between Grice's initial work on the co-operative principle and the concept of face. Leech has developed what he terms the politeness principle. If someone says 'Cold in here isn't it?', this is a request to shut the window that is not as informative as it could be but, by that very fact, maintains politeness and is face saving in a way that a blunt directive such as 'Switch on the heater' could not be (Leech 1983: 38–39). Brown and Levinson develop a more elaborate schema linking the co-operative principle with strategies that may be used to deal with what they call face-threatening acts. Elaborating on Goffman's notion, they define face as follows:

[...] 'face', the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects:

- (a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition
- (b) positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants

(Brown and Levinson 1978: 66)

We might re-phrase this as the want to be left alone and the want to be positively recognised. In relation to Grice's conversational maxims Brown and Levinson suggest that:

[...] face redress is one of the basic motives for departing from the maximally efficient talk that the Maxims define.

(Brown and Levinson 1978: 276)

However, if a participant in a conversation fails to recognise that face has been threatened, as is the case with the breaches to the co-operative principle, then people's behaviour, we assume, will continue on the same trajectory. This poses a problem for others present. They can either make the issue of face explicit or they can leave the breach unattended to.

In the case of the 86 year old woman I have discussed, no attempt was made by anyone present to suggest that her mother was not alive. In one respect this can be seen to be collusion among normal speakers to allow her face to be maintained. It might even be seen to be a form of consideration for negative face i.e. not to impose on the world that she has constructed for herself, which includes a live mother. But at the same time everyone knew that she had made a serious breach of conversational co-operation, so that another way of looking at it is that the collusion was an acknowledgement that she was stigmatised, not a full member, and that there was therefore no point in requiring a repair. Repair is not a pathological aspect of conversation: it is a normal part of it. Therefore, if a repair is not required of a participant who has made a noticeable error then he or she is not being treated as a full participant. As I noted in Chapter 1, one of the questions addressed in this study is whether confused speakers are directed by normal speakers through repair and correction back into full membership or whether they are left as less-than-full members. In the case of the woman I have just discussed, the non-activity of the normal speakers can be seen to be an acknowledgement of less-than-full membership.

In the case of Extract 3 I did not request correction although it took me a further utterance (about being an only child) to be able to contextualise what Mrs Bowles meant by 'at home' and thus to understand which 'welfare' she was referring to. In all repair and correction work the further away from the delict a correction request is placed the more difficult matters become, perhaps indicating a threat to face of the potential challenger for not paying sufficient attention to be able to make the request immediately. In Extract 4 I did request correction, only to have my request ignored. Not only did Mrs Bowles fail to appreciate that she had accidentally breached a conversational maxim, she failed to appreciate that face was being challenged, which suggests a lack of context-sensitivity both in regard to her own presentation of a narrative and to the occasion more generally.

In the case of Extract 5, Tom corrected Mr Graham on each occasion he breached the maxim of quality. If Tom was testing Mr Graham on the basis of

what normal members know, then not to correct would have been to confirm Mr Graham's less-than-full membership. In fact, what Tom did was to occupy a sort of half way house where he both corrected and offered a saving of face to Mr Graham by saying things like 'It's near enough'. However, when one excuses people for being 'near enough' where in ordinary member terms everyone should get the answers right, that too engenders face difficulties.

Awareness of accidental breaches

I spoke earlier of the extent to which moderately active confused speakers expose themselves in conversation. In some cases they appear to be aware that they are breaching some principle but are unable to repair or correct in such a way as to achieve adequate face redress:

Extract 6

Tom:	[...] How long have you lived here?
Mr Graham:	((Groans for 3.8 seconds)) (3.1) Something about ten years isn't it? Nayy (2.8) twenty ohm.

We may suggest that this response is problematic in terms of the maxim of quality. There are aspects of biography that no adult normal speaker might feel a loss of face about not being able to recall (for instance 'Name six people in your class in first year primary school' would be a real show stopper asked of a middle aged adult, but an answer might be expected of a seven year old). But there are others that anyone would be expected to answer. Mr Graham copes with his difficulty in this respect by indicating a margin of possible error and providing two answers. The first of these strategies would be appropriate in some circumstances, but it is perhaps questionable in this context. The production of two answers is even more problematic, not least because it is not clear whether the second was intended to nullify the first, and yet there is considerable discrepancy between them. Ten years or twenty years may be alright if we are talking about events a thousand years ago (well within appropriate margins) but it is too great a discrepancy when talking about how long one has lived in one's current house. However, even though the self-correction is apparently valid (not being challenged by Mrs Graham) to have to correct by such a wide margin how long one has lived somewhere can be seen to threaten face. I have to say also that it is possible that someone prompted Mr Graham after he had said 'ten years' because 'years' ends with a slight questioning uplift and there is a subsequent pause before he says 'twenty'. Nevertheless, even if another person corrected him,

the error from the first guess is still great enough to suggest that his information about ordinary chronological markers in his life is suspect.

A more spectacular example of problematic correction work comes from an Open University video we made for the course 'Working with Older People' (1990), where an older woman talking in a reminiscence group makes several attempts at saying how many siblings she has.

Extract 7

- Facilitator: How many brothers and sisters did you have when you were small?
 [
- Woman: Er er er eight.
- Facilitator: *Eight.*
- Man: Oh quite big yes.
 [
- Woman: Yes.
- Facilitator: And how many left now?=
 Woman: =No oh oh yes there is there's one cos he's coming down cos=
 Facilitator: =Yes=
 Woman: Coming down to see us see er er his wife died and of course he's alone that's the only one oh no two three I think ((Laughs nervously)) No there's erm there's Alice and she's not well er and there's there's er what's the () (2.0) I've forgot now I er er er I can't think you know oh my er he's coming to er give us some dinner and make a dinner for us and er he's the the boy.
- Facilitator: He's the youngest is he?
- Woman: Yeh yeh.

This sort of self-repair work is face-threatening and the woman, judging from the expression on her face, the plucking of her collar and the hiding of her face with her hands, becomes more and more anxious as she realises she is not getting it right.³ The repair work is unsolicited and as she speaks she makes several amendments. However, a repair having been instituted needs to be right because the more failed repair attempts someone makes the more his or her credibility and face are damaged. So it may be that the clever thing to do is in some way to acknowledge the mistake but to back off from doing the repair. This woman starts to do this, claiming she has forgotten, but then continues to plough on with the disastrous self-repair work. This makes the facilitator's job difficult. In the face of continuing self-corrections, which is she to take as correct? When will the repair stop? In fact, what she does is to ignore completely all the attempts at self-correction and alludes only to the woman's final statement – a common face-saving strategy. This preserves face, to some extent, and avoids the difficult issue of what full members are expected to know.

³ Seeing this on video provides a strong visual reminder of how much issues of 'face' can be manifested on someone's face!

Mrs Inman shows a different pattern of self-awareness:

Extract 8

1. Pam: Right and can you re remember anything about that? (.) How little you were when you left there?
(1.7)
2. Mrs Inman: Well I can't quite put anything really what we were like because there were were seven of us.
(.)
3. Pam: And where were you, sorry were where were you in a family of seven?=
=Yes=
4. Mrs:Inman: =But which number were you?=
=We were all children.
5. Pam: () Were you the little girl at the end?=
=We went to school=
6. Mrs Inman: =Yes=
() But it were only one building=
7. Mr Grace: =Right=
=That's if I'm doing it right.
(.)
8. Mrs Inman: Sounds alright to me and you were at school in Alderidge=
=((Low))Yes=
9. Pam: And and so when did you move to Bessingham?
(3.10)
10. Mrs Inman: It were when the I think it were when we started going to work or them things you know=
=No Mum you came to Bessingham when you got married to Dad.
(.)
11. Mrs Inman: Aye?=
=You came to Bessingham when you got married to Dad=
12. Mrs Grace: =There's a fair bit I don't remember.
13. Mrs Inman:

In this exchange the maxims which appear to be violated are those of quantity, quality and relevance. Mrs Inman is not as informative as is required, she gives inaccurate information and she can be seen to give irrelevant answers. However, she does recognise some of this and provides an excuse.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Atkinson (1973) suggests that in order to establish a particularised version of someone's biography there needs to be a generalisable biography that is highly recognisable and anonymous. Here the questions as put by me are a combination of the use of a generalised biography (when someone went to school, how many children there were in the family) and particularised refinements (asking where she was placed in a family of seven). Although the question 'When did you come to Bessingham?' permits more than one correct answer (which might be, for example, '1940', or an answer relating to events of work, family or marriage and so on) Mrs Inman chooses to say that it was related to work and is corrected by her daughter, Mrs Grace, who links it instead to getting

married. So Mrs Inman links the wrong set of biographical information to an event. She also fails to understand two of my questions completely (Utterances 3 and 5) as they begin to move on to anticipate more specific answers: though of course, this may be a result of the way that I phrased the questions.

However, although Mrs Inman may be anxious in this situation, nevertheless she continues to contribute to the conversation by offering comments on quality: she acknowledges an awareness of *the need* to try to be correct and co-operative. Given the apparent shortfalls in her knowledge, Mrs Inman has to try to remain co-operative while at the same time being less informative than required. She can do this, perhaps, by prioritising maxims other than that of quantity. And this may be a strategy that can be used by confused speakers in order to maintain face: to prioritise a conversational maxim they can cope with over others that they cannot. Mrs Inman offered several such disclaimers during the interview:

Extract 9

Pam: What programmes do you like? (2.8) What programmes do you like?
What programmes do you turn on for?=
Mrs Inman: =I don't can't pronounce them properly when you ask like that (.)
because you know I don't know [...]

Extract 10

Pam: So what so when you go back today what will you do for the rest of
the day?
(.)
Mrs Inman: I can't tell you I don't know=
Pam: =You don't know what do you do most days?
(.)
Mrs Inman: Well I can't tell you much about it really.
[
Daughter You [...]

We could suggest that in saying 'I don't know' Mrs Inman prioritises the maxim of quality: she does not say that for which she had inadequate evidence and she does not say something which she believes to be false. The problem with all of this is that people are expected, as a general rule, to be able to answer questions about their own history and their current lives. In substantive terms in a conversation about one's own biography we might expect the maxim of quality to be unproblematic to the teller of the biography. Yet in Extracts 8, 9 and 10 we see problems with biographical information in a variety of contexts, not only in relation to long and short term biography but to routine daily activity as well. The inadequacy of Mrs Inman's knowledge is, in ordinary member terms, comprehensive: it is not

just a momentary lapse. And avoidance of providing information about one's own biography raises yet more questions relating to face. Here prioritising one maxim over another (but having to do it frequently and in a number of contexts) can be seen to involve the unhappy tactic of trying for the least loss of face rather than avoiding losing face altogether.

So when Mrs Inman was aware that she was in danger of not getting it right she usually drew back from answering or made an excuse. On other occasions she sought corroboration step by step ('That's if I'm doing it right'). While the co-operative principle is threatened very frequently in everyday conversation normal speakers have strategies for its repair. Mura Swan (1983) discusses licensing for violations and cites such licences as 'I'm trying to think', 'Oh I'm sorry I really have been rambling on', 'Before we were so rudely interrupted' and so on. Brown and Levinson discuss hedges used in co-operative conversation and suggest that conversational participants adjust the emphases in conversation drawing attention to the maxim to which they are orienting and guarding themselves against misrepresentation: 'To the best of my recollection' (quality), 'I don't know whether you're interested' (relevance) and so on (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 169, 174). So 'If I'm doing it right' can be seen as a perfectly ordinary conversational device that might be used by anyone. However, the problem here lies in the area for which Mrs Inman is seeking the licence, that is (what should be) familiar aspects of her own biography. In response to Mrs Inman's orientation to the maxim of quality I answer encouragingly. But I am unable to provide corroboration about the knowledge itself. And I am an inappropriate person for her to ask whether she is 'doing it right' in terms of quality, in this instance. Interviewers can be expected to develop a framework that is recognisable as one upon which people can build their own biography, but they cannot usually comment on the veracity of any particulars that are stated.

So Mrs Inman presents a sort of cusp case between being unaware of the maxims and therefore accidentally violating them, and deliberately breaching them for some implicative purpose. That is to say, she is aware that she has breached them, or may have done so, and that she might not be able to repair them adequately.

Other confused speakers, aware that they did not have the knowledge required, engaged in a dialogue with carers and asked for help to provide an answer which accommodated the conversational maxims. This indicates that an extra step is required which the confused speaker cannot provide.

Extract 11

Pam: And so when did you move away from that village?=
 Mrs Bowles: =When was it?=
 Mr Bowles: =((Low)) During the war=
 Pam: =((Low)) During the war=
 Mr Bowles: =((Low)) During the war=
 Mrs Bowles: = ((Low)) Yes (.) it must have been.

Again, this raises the issue of how much of one's own biography one is expected to have access to in order to maintain face as an ordinary member. On the one hand, we can suggest a similar interpretation to that in Extract 6 – that people should know when they moved where. On the other hand, we could say that, in this instance, Mrs Bowles's invitation to her son to join in the conversation implies that she sees this as one of the more murky areas of biography where it is legitimate to seek additional information from knowledgeable others. We could suggest by this that Mrs Bowles is employing face-work which brushes aside the threat to face and maintains the conversation as per normal. Indeed, the quiet low tone of all parties who take part in this exchange suggests that it is conducted as a consultation aside from the conversation – a discussion which is legitimate not face-threatening. Goffman, of course, outlines the refusal to take challenges to face as one form of face-work (Goffman: 1969). And in some senses this reflects the point I noted about Mrs Bowles's accidental breaches of which she was unaware, cases where she treated a challenge to face as an ordinary question.

Deliberate breaches

Up to now I have treated Grice's maxims as if they controlled ordinary talk or ought to do so and have shown how confused speakers who are able to operate the basic machinery of conversational interaction often fall foul of these maxims. However, only a little reflection will reveal that much ordinary conversation fails to meet the requirements of these maxims not just as a result of accident but by design. And, indeed, Grice himself was well aware of this. He saw the maxims as oriented-to features in conversations not as rules that are always obeyed. For example, he posited four common violations of the co-operative principle. He suggested that people can:

- (i) Violate a maxim 'quietly and unostentatiously' with an intention to mislead;
- (ii) Opt out from the maxim and more generally from co-operation (I cannot say more, my lips are sealed);

- (iii) Be faced by a clash of maxims so that choosing one maxim violates another;
- (iv) Flout a maxim, blatantly fail to fulfil it i.e. exploit it.

(Adapted from Grice 1975: 49)

In his examples of conversational implicature Grice cites a number of readily recognisable conversational gambits (some of which I list here): damning with faint praise; irony; metaphor; meiosis; hyperbole; obscurity in terms (for example, spelling out words in front of children or dogs so that they will not understand but the other participating conversationalists will). Implicature is a way of saying more with words than the words themselves convey. In order for it to be successful it needs to be context-sensitive, as Grice's example of spelling out words in front of children illustrates: there would usually be little point in spelling out words in front of those who could already spell them and thus understand immediately what was being said.⁴

One of the things conversational implicature can do, then, is to perform some activity which does not become explicit interactional business in conversation (in the case above, hiding of facts or proposals from children precludes the possibility of them becoming their interactional business). In her discussion of embedded correction, Jefferson notes in relation to explicit correction that what has been going on before the correction stops, that accounting takes place during the correction (i.e. instructing, admitting, apologising), and that after the correction the corrected person reiterates the correction (Jefferson 1987: 88). All this suggests a distinct episode where correction becomes the business of the conversation. Jefferson goes on to note that '[...] the talk which constitutes embedded correction does not permit of accountings' (p. 95). Following from this idea of embeddedness it can be seen that conversational implicature can be used to produce social action which is not explicit interactional business. For example, damning with faint praise can be seen to perform the act of criticising.

So, for implicature to come off, that is for no accounting to be required, participants need to be context-aware, both of the local environment and of the other participants. Otherwise they risk their obscurity, hyperbole, ellipsis or whatever being misunderstood, challenged and made accountable.

⁴ Though it might be possible to imagine cases where there would be.

Nevertheless, when accounting is required, the speaker can point back to the words themselves and suggest the action was not, in fact, performed!

Given, then, that violation of the maxims, both accidental and intended, is common and is, in fact, part of ordinary talk, why do the breaches of the maxims I have examined in this chapter come across as signs of confusion rather than as ordinary talk? As I have already noted, one kind of orientation to the maxims is correction. Errors may be made in relation to these maxims of the kinds I have noted confused speakers making, but one would expect self-correction when the error becomes apparent. Moreover, when the violation of a maxim becomes part of the interactional business of conversation then the correction must be correct. However, I have suggested that moderately active confused speakers do not always engage in corrections when maxims have been breached, and when they do so they may fail to bring off the corrections effectively, one problem being the inadequacy of their correction.

The following extract illustrates some of the issues of the relationship between the conversational maxims and implicature that arise in the case of one moderately active confused speaker:

Extract 12

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Tom: | I'd just like to ask you a question about your house= |
| 2. Mr Graham: | =Beg your pardon?=
(.) |
| 3. Tom: | =You've lived here a long time in this house.
(.) |
| 4. Mr Graham: | Yes well what do you call a long time?=
(.) |
| 5. Tom: | =Well you tell me how long have you lived here? |
| 6. Mr Graham: | ((Groans for 3.8 seconds)) (3.1) Something about ten years Isn't it?
Nayy (2.8) twenty ohm. |
| 7. Tom: | About twenty years.
((Mr Graham groans for 1.9 seconds)) |
| 8. Tom: | I've noticed that the toilet's outside is that a problem for you? |
| 9. Mr Graham: | Erer well in a way yeyes but it's er the trou the er I don't know
whether you've been out there and had a look at it have you?=
(.) |
| 10. Tom: | =I haven't seen in seen inside it no= |
| 11. Mr Graham: | =No well that's for that's for you to (1.6) look inside. |

In this exchange Mr Graham puts Utterances 1 and 3 back to Tom by asking a question (Utterance 4) that suggests that Tom has not been informative enough for him (Mr Graham) to engage in a truthful exchange. If he does not know what a long time is then how can he answer the question as posed? Here we see Mr Graham performing his own breaching experiment, since although Tom's question permits a number of both correct and appropriate answers (for example, 'Since the war', 'Since we got married', 'Since 1945' all of which might define 'a long time'), Mr Graham is taking a very precise

view of it. It seems to me that this exchange links with Extract 5 (three utterances occurred between the two exchanges recorded in Extract 5 and 12). In Extract 5 Tom asks questions about times and dates. There, precise, correct answers are called for and each time Tom feeds back comments about correct answers. Now it seems that Mr Graham is testing out the issue of precision again. Is it a precise answer that is required? In other words, is the maxim of quality being viewed as paramount in this situation? Utterances 8 to 11 show Mr Graham almost modelling himself on Tom as a test questioner. And again after a topic shift by Tom he puts the problem back to Tom as test questioner (Utterance 9), just as Tom had done to him (Utterance 5 – ‘Well you tell me’). He then goes on to offer a sort of challenge to Tom: Utterance 11, Mr Graham’s *coup de grâce*, obscurely answers Toms question – if Tom looks inside the toilet he will understand whether it is a problem. So he has addressed the question by thrusting responsibility on Tom. In a sense this can be seen as opting out of the maxim of quality. It is not exactly ‘My lips are sealed’, it is more elliptical than that; suggesting that if Tom wants to discover the truth of the situation he must seek it himself. This could almost be seen as a defence of negative face, a suggestion that the social action Tom has performed with this questions was an imposition: in his own defence Mr Graham challenges Tom’s face.

In continuing my discussion of implicature I want to examine a complex example of its use which creates an impression of a confused speaker. In an interview with Mrs Inman a packet of photographs was produced of the wedding of her grandson which had taken place on the previous Saturday.

Extract 13

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Mrs Grace: | Now who are they?
(2.6) |
| 2. Mrs Inman: | Well that's your daughter= |
| 3. Mrs Grace: | =Yeh who is she to you?
[|
| 4. Mrs Inman: | And that's her husband she's er aunt to me= |
| 5. Mrs Grace: | =She isn't= |
| 6. Mrs Inman: | =I mean I'm aunt to her= |
| 7. Mrs Grace: | =No she's your grand daughter. |

We may suggest that the initial stage of this exchange is a comparable situation to that of formulating place: the formulation not only needs to be correct, it needs to be appropriate. In his discussion on formulating place Schegloff notes:

The 'problem' of locational formulation is this: for any location to which reference is made, there is a set of terms each of which, by a correspondence test, is a correct way to refer to it. On any actual occasion of use, however, not any member of the set is 'right'.

(Schegloff 1972b: 81)

In Utterance 2, Mrs Inman presents a correct formulation: it could, at a first reading, be seen as an instance of what Grice calls generalised implicature:

Sometimes one can say that the use of a certain form of words in an utterance would normally (in the ABSENCE of special circumstances) carry such-and-such an implicature or type of implicature [...] Anyone who uses a sentence of the form *X is meeting a woman* this evening would normally implicate that to be person he met was someone other than X's wife, mother, sister or perhaps even a close platonic friend.

(Grice 1975: 56)

For a woman to use 'your daughter' to describe her own grand daughter may imply a degree of censure (as when a woman might say to her partner 'Your son broke the dining room window today' in order to make a certain point, distancing herself from the behaviour and aligning it with her partner). It could be seen by co-conversationalists as a marked choice from a number of correct terms. However, in Utterance 3 Mrs Grace asks her to choose an *appropriate* formulation, thus indicating that a marked use of the term is inappropriate. So here we have a situation where the notion of implicature is almost inverted. That is, Mrs Grace discerns that Mrs Inman's words are saying more than they should have. However, as the exchange goes on Mrs Inman fails to give even a correct but inappropriate formulation (in Utterance 5 Mrs Grace challenges the correctness of the formulation). As the episode unfolds it appears that Mrs Inman can not articulate what her own relationship is with the young woman in the photograph. Such incompetence can be seen to be charming in children when they think their own father, is their grandmother's father, but adults are expected to know these things.

Talking about photographs can be seen as yet another manifestation of biography: people are expected to be able to articulate aspects of their biography from the story that photographs tell. They are expected to give a *correct* formulation and they are expected to be able to deal with *appropriate* naming of close relatives for the situation. Moreover, they are expected to be able to name those in the photographs in such a way as to accommodate what they know of the person to whom they are showing the photographs. That is to say, among close family members they might say 'Tommy is a devil' whereas to others they would need to say that Tommy was their grandson and that he had just buried his father in the sand when this photograph was taken. So, given a medium that might be seen to be

unproblematic for most people as a platform for handling their biography, Mrs Inman fails to perform competently.

Interviews, co-operation and face

So far I have examined co-operation and face by means of a number of extracts from my data but have only made passing comments about the context of the interview.

An interview places particular constraints upon face. It is a sort of trade-off between positive and negative face on both sides. For example, in an ethnographic interview an interviewer would expect to facilitate positive face as much as possible on the part of the respondent. To do anything which may damage the face of the respondent might be seen as undermining the usefulness of the interview. On the other hand investigative television reporters are adept at impinging on negative face and shape many of their interactions with respondents using this tactic: they may impose on territory which is personal and private and by focusing on negative face they provide no opportunity for the other to promote positive face. However, *any* interview may be seen as a potential challenge to the face of the respondent. Questions asked by the interviewer are not necessarily predictable to the respondent, and each requires the respondent to answer in a way which maintains his or her line (Goffman 1969: 3). When respondents evade answering questions it is risky because this may suggest that they are having difficulty in maintaining their line. And if they choose to answer questions they have to do so in a way which does maintain their line. Additionally, to be successful the line must be consistent with the line that should be taken at an interview. For a respondent to clam up completely certainly is a line but not one which is appropriate.⁵

As I have suggested throughout this study, the interview is a joint construction and the co-operation and face-work of the confused speaker is complemented by that of normal speakers. As Goffman notes:

[...] in many relationships, the members come to share a face, so that in the presence of third parties an improper act on the part of one member becomes a source of acute embarrassment to the other members.

(Goffman 1969: 34)

In the last chapter we considered a group of confused speakers who were very unforthcoming. The involvement of the carers in the conversation was,

⁵ I have already alluded to the problems which arise when minimally active speakers do not speak in interviews, although not specifically in relation to face.

on the whole, extensive: assisting in answering questions appropriately, or asking appropriate questions for the confused speaker to answer. In the case of moderately active confused speakers we might expect, perhaps, a greater predominance of self-correction, thus obviating the need for carers to intervene. However, as I have shown, self-correction on the part of the confused speakers does not always solve problems of either co-operation or face. And carers do generally intervene from quite early on, claiming the status of interactants rather than witnesses to the event. The primary issue relating to face for normal speakers would appear to be the problem of the confused speaker's inadequate biography for the occasion, which puts the co-operative principle under pressure and raises many issues of how and when face should be maintained and by whom.

In the case of moderately active confused speakers carers appear to make four main types of contributions:

- answering for the confused speaker, largely correcting things that the confused speaker has said;
- prompting, suggesting new topic developments (that they know the confused speaker will be able to deal with or at least acknowledge);
- being co-respondents, that is to say on certain occasions carers answer and elaborate on some of the discussion from their own point of view (not as meta talk but as a contribution to development of topics that I have raised);
- acting as informants and engaging in meta talk with the interviewer, thus reducing the conversation to a two-person conversation, effectively excluding or marginalising the confused speaker.

Each of these modes of participation can be seen to be significant in terms of co-operation in conversation, although they seem to have different implications for the face of moderately active confused speakers.

As *correctors* carers seek to ensure adherence to the co-operative principle. This is illustrated in Extract 13 where Mrs Grace orients to the maxim of quality by eliciting correct and appropriate formulations of a particular relationship. At the same time, though, her corrections can be seen as a challenge to face for Mrs Inman.

As *prompts* carers offer up topics that will enable the confused speaker to talk co-operatively, or topics that they can develop on behalf of the confused speaker. For example:

Extract 14

Mrs Whittaker: Ye:s I'm in a bungalow one of the council bungalows=
 Pam: =I see=
 Mrs Whittaker: And there's heating and cords to pull for help you know=
 [Warden
 Mrs Becker: assisted.
 Mrs Whittaker: =Very nice=
 Pam: =Sheltered accommodation I think it's called is it? sheltered (.)
 sheltered.
 Mrs Becker: Yes you have a warden.
 Mrs Whittaker: We have a warden=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mrs Whittaker: =And we have cords=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mrs Whittaker: =In the living room the bedroom.

Here Mrs Becker prompts her mother to say more about the warden. At other points in the interview she does the same in regard to dressmaking, ballroom dancing, crochet and a number of other topics. In such cases the possibility for co-operation is set up. Mrs Becker plays an enabling role for her mother and sets up the opportunity for her to present positive face. (It is interesting to note that Kemper, Lyons and Anagnopoulos (1995) suggest that spouses and carers of people with probable Alzheimer's Disease successfully offer contextual cues that enable confused speakers to retrieve more complete stories about aspects of their life histories.) This is to be compared with the case of minimally active confused speakers I have discussed where carers carry the onus of topic development for their relatives.

As *co-respondents* carers appear to be reading the conversation as accessible to them as equal co-participants: that is co-operation is something they can offer alongside the confused speaker. This category of carer interaction did not appear in relation to minimally active confused speakers, perhaps because the burden of topic development for the confused speaker was already being carried by carers, so possibly they were not listening to see how topic development related to them. This sort of intervention turns the conversation firmly into a three-way negotiation of co-operation, as the extract below demonstrates:

Extract 15

(Follows on immediately from Extract 11)

Mr Bowles: Before the war before the war=
 Mrs Bowles: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: =Cos that's when my father came we came ((Door bangs obscuring talk)) cos this is my mother=

Pam: =Right yes.
 (.)
 Mr Bowles My father well he had silicosis we came down here (.) got to be 38
 39 ()
 Mrs Bowles: [I was born in 1915.

Here Mr Bowles is setting the record straight biographically and giving a context for his own contribution. 'This is my mother' is a marked remark. I think I did or said something in the early part of this conversation that led him to believe that I thought Mrs Bowles was his wife rather than his mother. Or, possibly, since Mrs Bowles asked him questions which implied a shared biography (see Extract 11), he may have thought that I would interpret their relationship as that of husband and wife. Here Mr Bowles can be seen to be demonstrating how his own remarks should be oriented to. He sees himself as a ratified participant in the proceedings, someone for whom face is currently active. In fact, Mr Bowles speaks extensively about himself and his own life. Much of his talk is linked to Mrs Bowles, their lifestyle and so on but some of his discussion borders on meta talk (see below) about the problems of living with someone who is confused.

Finally, as *informants*, carers extrapolate from co-operation in conversation to a more general notion of co-operation and competence in everyday life and engage in meta talk.⁶ In some cases they may 'blow the whistle' on the confused speaker. I noted earlier that one reading of the situations in which carers intervene is that they see themselves as a team with the confused speaker and answer as 'us'. The notion of 'blowing the whistle' offers a counterbalance to this: carers occasionally draw away from being 'us'; distancing themselves from the confused speaker as the following extract shows:

Extract 16

Mr Bowles: She lost them (her glasses) yesterday=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: But she hadn't lost them at all she'd just put em down on the bed=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: When she'd gone to change (.) her dress and come over to go to
 (Belshaw).
 Pam: Mmm.
 Mr Bowles: She'd taken them off (.) left em on the bed come downstairs and
 gone=
 Pam: [((Low)) forgotten them

⁶ This sort of device is one I have already begun to develop in the previous chapter in relation to Barry and Mr Hoy.

- Mr Bowles: =To Age Concern. They didn't know ()=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: =Whether she'd lost em there=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: =Or where they were.
 Pam: So it turns into a bit of a saga.
 Mr Bowles: It's a major production every time.
 [Yes yes yes.
 Mr Bowles: I mean it was a major production this morning because I didn't realise she hadn't got them on til twenty five minutes to twelve=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: =And we'd got to be up here by twelve o'clock=
 Pam: =Yes=
 Mr Bowles: And I didn't even realise she hadn't got them on I mean I didn't even come home until eight o'clock this morning ((Pam laughs)) I've had about an hour and a half's sleep so far=
 Pam: = And then you had to follow up the glasses and then you had to yeh.
 [One thing and another you see it's not
 Pam: [Yeh easy.
 [...] [Mr Bowles talks about his shift work for a few minutes]
 Pam: Do you find things like household tasks how do you find doing those nowadays? Are you=
 Mrs Bowles ((Low)) (I just get on with it)=
 Pam: =Just get on with it yes is it
 [().
 Mr Bowles: Well
 Mrs Bowles: [You do your you do I must admit yes you get on with the pots alright don't you? Do the pots and things like that.

Mrs Bowles begins to be seen as person who is, at the least, variable in her ability to get by as an ordinary person. Her son offers two different assessments of her in a short space of time; one suggests that she is incompetent (the glasses), the other that she is competent (the pots). It is interesting that in the former case he talks *about* her and thus distances himself from her performance, this distance possibly being heightened by myself weighing in as a 'member of his team' reformulating his criticisms of his mother. On the other hand, when he talks about her competence he talks *to* her, relating himself to her performance. Note too that Mrs Bowles allows the first account to go unchallenged, instead of saying 'Get away with you' or remarking that anyone could lose his or her glasses. Although her face is challenged, Mrs Bowles takes no action to rectify matters. We may almost suggest that in her silence she is endorsing herself as a ritually dangerous actor (Goffman: 1969). And this fits with her general pattern of ignoring or failing to appreciate challenges to face.

Conversation and identity.

We can see that in endeavouring to co-operate in conversations, moderately active confused speakers engage in identity work which often leads to a loss of face. Unfortunately, some of their attempts to save face, by their very nature, damage it: for example, some of the self-deprecation that goes on in answers can be seen in terms of work which both excuses and at the same time stigmatises the speaker. Effectively these speakers devalue their identities so that other delicts can be viewed according to the lesser standards set by the impaired identity. The face-work they undertake itself draws attention to their incapacity.

If people show themselves to be short on common-sense and biographical knowledge, and cannot account for the shortfall to the satisfaction of other members, they are likely to lose face. Indeed, Payne and Cuff suggest that common-sense knowledge 'entails notions of propriety, of what persons ought to know, ought to be and ought to do' (Payne and Cuff 1982: 5). The co-operative principle is a medium for being able to show a sense of propriety, and conversational implicature is one way that normal competent members can demonstrate, words notwithstanding, that they are co-operating and do have a sense of propriety. But confused speakers do not always have the resources to do co-operative conversation and issues around knowledge and identity show this up. Goffman's footnote to part of his discussion on face throws more light on this:

When the person knows the others well, he will know what issues ought not to be raised, and what situations the others ought not to be placed in, and he will be free to introduce matters at will in all other areas. When the others are strangers to him, he will often reverse the formula, restricting himself to specific areas that he knows are safe. On these occasions, as Simmel suggests, ...discretion consists by no means only in the respect for the secret of the other, for his specific will to conceal this or that from us, but in staying away from the knowledge of all that the other does not expressly reveal to us [...]

(Goffman 1969: 12[Footnote]).

The ordinary proprieties of face are jointly constructed by carers, interviewer and confused speakers. The first part of Goffman's footnote can be seen to accommodate *carers* of confused speakers who know how and what issues can be touched upon in order to assist the maintenance of face. Some carers can be seen to be engaging in a delicate balancing act of maintaining the face of the interviewer in the encounter and preserving the face of the confused speaker by broaching 'safe' topics safely; others appear to be less concerned. However, in fact, there is rarely any such thing as a safe topic, as is shown with the example of Mrs Inman's photographs.

The second part of the footnote could be applied to the situation in which I found myself as *interviewer*, and this also relates to safety in conversation. One has to assume, as an interviewer, that one can ask some questions and make some comments: otherwise interaction becomes impossible and the identities of interviewer and respondent become non-viable. My questions can be seen as an attempt to stick to safe areas. But, since the confused speaker's biographical knowledge is suspect, it becomes very difficult to know what knowledge is a safe area for discussion. Yet in everyday terms we can say that people expect there to be safe areas of conversation: it cannot, in general, be conducted as if every potential topic were a minefield. While there are always issues of face, as a general rule, ordinary members are expected to be able to negotiate the rough and tumble of ordinary conversation.

The *confused speakers* have two choices: either they can say nothing or they can say something. If they say nothing then the entrance of carers into the conversation raises the question of the extent to which being 'answered for' by someone else is a threat to face; but if confused speakers say something, few topics are safe – responding is therefore also dangerous.⁷ They are caught in a double bind: they are damned if they do and damned if they do not.

Sometimes the confused speakers themselves comment on the problems that their impairment brings them. This is to move from a focus on the conversation as a form of social action to it becoming a commentary. Two of the people to whom I talked did talk briefly about the experience of being confused. What they had to say appears below:

Extract 17

- Pam: Yes yes do you find that you lose words?
 Mrs Inman: Yes sometimes and sometimes.
 Pam: And you can't find what you want to say. Do you know what you want to say in your head?
 Mrs Inman: Well I do but when I get there I can't do it.
 Pam: You can't do it. What does that feel like?
 Mrs Inman: I just put it down and just look after myself and then do it slowly.
 Pam: So that's one of the things you try to do it slowly. What other little tricks have you got for helping? You doing it slowly sounds like a really good idea and are there other things you do as well to find the words?
 Mrs Inman: No I don't think that there's any that I can pronounce properly.

⁷ Politically those who speak out only at the behest of others are called puppets, and this suggests that having no line of one's own is problematic in terms of face.

- Pam: You find you don't think that you can pronounce well. Do you lose them so that you don't know the name for?
- Mrs Inman: No I just when it's in place like this and just wait for an answer and
- Pam: Does the answer spring into your head eventually?
- Mrs Inman: Yes, I think it does myself I don't want to keep repeating it.

Extract 18

- Tom: Are there other things that are quite difficult at the moment?
- Mrs Graham: No I don't think so, can't think of anything.
- Mr Graham: It's the body er the body of the er the bodyd stud is studying you know, funny little things wife like, she's telling the truth, absolutely I know all that and I know but um funny little things you know I might you know keep and er one of those like, I wouldn't you know blow the gaffe, if you can understand what I mean.

Both Mrs Inman and Mr Graham demonstrate that they are aware that there is an appropriate way to conduct a conversation. Mrs Inman talks about not being able to pronounce things properly (I think I may have misunderstood this phrase during the conversation). But not being able to pronounce the words seems to have a connection with the idea of spoken competence – almost as one would speak of not being able to pronounce a word in a foreign language. Mrs Inman also emphasises in several ways the benefits of keeping quiet and of waiting: she does not want to keep repeating things, she is aware that this is not appropriate conversational behaviour. Mr Graham speaks directly about not wanting to blow the gaffe. For both speakers, it seems that there is a strong sense of the loss of competence. For both there is an awareness that interacting with the world now brings considerable threats.

However, the major problem with all this is that talking about blowing the gaffe is itself blowing the gaffe! Few people choose to draw attention to their potential as gaffe blowers: to do so focuses on their potential incapacity and threatens face. When people make a gaffe a commonly used technique employed by others is to avoid reference to it, or to take someone aside from the public domain and tell them quietly. If face is to be saved it should not be interactional business and certainly should not be put on the agenda by the gaffe blower.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the talk of moderately active confused speakers. I have suggested that although their talk is often structurally normal they fail to fulfil some of the other requirements of normal interactional appearances: notably they lack knowledge which 'anyone

should know', generating problems in handling conversational co-operation and, more importantly, constituting a threat to face.

Firstly, I looked at accidental breaches of co-operation of which the speakers seemed unaware. Such breaches are common in ordinary conversation, but they are subject to routine correction, thereby avoiding any threat to face. However, moderately active confused speakers often fail to do any face-work to rectify the line they are holding and appear not to construe interventions by normal speakers as invitations to amend face.

Secondly I looked at accidental breaches in co-operation where moderately active confused speakers did seem aware of the problems but were unable to correct or repair the breach enough to constitute adequate face-work. In this situation they appeared often to have to make quite explicit statements about their conversational capabilities, and these drew attention to their limited competence, thus exacerbating the threat to face.

Thirdly I looked at deliberate breaches in conversational co-operation, breaches which (if brought off) would count as embedded conversational work that could possibly circumnavigate issues of face. However, I suggested that moderately active confused speakers had problems with deliberate breaching: that the breaches often became an explicit interactional issue and that their consequent face-work generally failed.

Throughout the chapter I have drawn attention to my assumption that although moderately active confused speakers are in some respects able to conduct structurally normal talk they are unable to present their biographies in a form expected of a normal member in an interview situation. I have suggested that the format of corrections and repairs is available to all members and competently performed by these speakers. However, to have to use them in the matter of one's own biography creates a situation where the speakers' statements are hearable by normal participants as 'confused' rather than as isolated incidents of talk gone wrong.

I have set my discussions of co-operation and face in the context of the circumstances of the interview, suggesting that conversational co-operation in an interview has special requirements. Thus, how much one says, the issue of truth, relation and manner all have to be oriented to in distinctive ways in the interview situation. I have noted, in particular, that conversational implicature is significant because if our words mean more than we say then this must be context-sensitive, since it is necessary to understand how much

and what we can implicate when speaking to an unknown speaker (that is to an interviewer).

So in this chapter I have suggested that structural competence in talk is an insufficient condition to make an efficient conversationalist. This has to be combined with an ability to fit one's personal history and identity into a conversation in such a way as to accommodate to context.

Chapter 6

Very active confused speakers

In this chapter I look at the final category of confused speakers I identified, those who speak a great deal. To this end I examine the talk of two women, Tilly and Mrs Bruner. Both take many initiatives in the conversation: they ask many questions and turn responses to other people’s queries or questions into initiatives of their own.

The data is taken from Moyra’s interview with Tilly and from parts of the tapes that Mr Bruner recorded for me. In the recording of the interview with Tilly the conversation begins and concludes abruptly and contains nothing that can be identified as an opening or closing sequence to the encounter. The talk involves a long dispute about who lives in the flat and whether Tilly’s sister Martha is alive; an episode of making and drinking tea, although there are still echoes of the talk about Tilly’s rightful home, and a long discussion about Tilly’s health – hinging almost entirely on a story about some Mentholum Deep Heat Ointment which she has found very helpful for her rheumatism. The remainder of the conversation centres on Tilly’s experience in service. The conversations involving Mr and Mrs Bruner consist of a number of summons and answer sequences, and of talk taking place at lunch time and at bedtime.

Embedded face-work and repetition

In this section I examine Tilly’s participation in the interview and the part that Moyra plays as an interviewer. I have already noted that in ethnographic interviews we expect the interviewer to talk less than the respondent. The general format of such interviews might be as follows:

- A

Interviewer

Opening remarks/para-chat

Respondent

Para-chat
- B

Interviewer

(Short) open ended questions introducing topics

Respondent

Lengthy responses according to the project of the question and occasional enquiries as to whether this is what the interviewer wants

Interviewer

Continuers and occasional requests for clarification

Interviewer
Closings/para-chat
Respondent
Closings/para-chat.

Sequence B involves repetitions of various combinations of question and response throughout the interview and may also be combined with para-chat when occasioned activity, such as taking tea, occurs alongside the interview. Indeed, this may even supplant the interview talk for a while: in which case we might expect some mini openings or closings to take place within Sequence B. A simple Sequence B pattern is illustrated in Extract 1:

Extract 1

Moyra: You were telling me once that you went down to the seaside with them=
Tilly: =Oh yes they had a house there=
[
Moyra: Did they?
Tilly: =Isle of Wight=
Moyra: =Isle of Wight.
[
Tilly: And er we used to go out bathing and all that sort of thing in the afternoon.
[
Moyra: Did you?
Tilly: =They didn't make any () difficulties about that=
Moyra: =No=
Tilly: =Long as you did your work and did it right nobody interfered with you only the housekeeper was our boss=
Moyra: =Yes.
[
Tilly: You see.

There is nothing remarkable about this fragment of conversation as an interview. Tilly understands Moyra's first statement to be an invitation to talk about a particular topic. She answers according to the project of this statement, which functions effectively as an elicitation. She also sets her remarks about what she did at the seaside into a wider context of the responsibilities of working in service. Moyra responds with continuers, and with the exception of the first turn of the sequence her utterances are generally shorter than Tilly's.

Extract 2 also illustrates the identities of interviewer and respondent as non-problematic: both women are talking in a way that is taken for granted in an interview:

Extract 2

Moyra: What did you cook, what kinds of things?=
Tilly: =Well I was in the kitchen I was the vegetable maid=
Moyra: =Yes=

- Tilly: =I cooked all the vegetables=
 Moyra: =I see=
 Tilly: Oh yes and er they er had any amount.
 (.)
 Moyra: Yes=
 Tilly: =Grew their own stuff because they had big gardens you see.

Here Moyra, as interviewer, asks a question and Tilly develops and expands an answer to it. Moyra leaves Tilly to get on with this, offering only continuers. Her short turns of continuers at TRPs support Tilly in carrying on and can do only a limited amount of work, serving no part in helping to change the topic. If one is to participate only in this way, one must accept the topic management exercised by the other person and in this extract Moyra appears to do this.

However, although the conversation maintains a recognisable interview format on a turn-by-turn basis there are respects in which it is problematic. Firstly, there are issues round the negotiation of topic choice and development. These can be identified by the extensive repetition which is used by both interviewer and respondent. Secondly, there are problems which centre on Tilly's biography, and these relate to issues of identity and face for both Tilly and Moyra.

Repetition

Repetition *per se* is not an indicator of confusion. Tannen (1989) cites a considerable number of instances where repetition is an acceptable, useful and taken-for-granted aspect of conversation. For example:

- it can amplify the amount of talk in situations where silence is deemed to be uncomfortable or unacceptable;
- it can set up a paradigm into which to slot new information: people may repeat a sentence structure several times using different words;
- it can give people a chance to think about what to say next as they repeat in some way what they have already said;
- it can create redundancy so that there is a chance people can pick up the gist of what is being said, even if they fail to understand one part of the talk;
- it can serve a referential, evaluative and tying function connecting different parts of the discourse;

- it can serve interactional purposes: it enables listeners to show that they are listening, to show humour and also allows a new entrant into the conversation to be informed about what is going on.

A number of these functions of repetition can be seen as potentially relating to face. For example, in the case of filling uncomfortable silences someone's face may be being saved. Redundancy can enable people more easily to pick up what is going on and thus not lose face. The space that repetition provides can give people a chance to do the necessary face-work so as to avoid embarrassment.

We may suggest, therefore, that in some circumstances repetition can be seen as an indicator of local conversational management which involves embedded action oriented to face that never becomes explicit remedial work. As I noted earlier, Jefferson (1987) talks about embedded corrections in this way when she suggests that some corrections do not constitute interactional business and do not require accountings. And there is some evidence to suggest that in terms of topic choice and development Moyra uses repetition to do such embedded face-work. For example, one problem for Moyra is that Tilly often ignores her suggestions for topic development: and even if she defers to Moyra's choice of topic she very quickly returns to her own chosen topic. For example:

Extract 3

- Tilly: Cooking=
 Moyra: =You were a cook=
 Tilly: =Yes.
 (.)
 Moyra: Did you start (.) you couldn't have started off as a cook did you?=
 Tilly: Er I always had done did do cooking nothing else.
 [But when you
 Moyra: started?=
 Tilly: =Young girl young girl yes=
 Moyra: =When you started did you start as
 [When I started I did that=
 Tilly: =Yes.
 Moyra: That was when (.) they're a big place you see.
 Tilly: Yes.
 Moyra: And there's a full staff well ye you have to do all sorts of things in that line.
 [Yes.
 Moyra: =Vegetables all sorts of things and er er (3.5) the dishes the dishes to wash up it's *all* interesting you know.
 [Yes it is.
 Moyra:

Tilly: =And clean=
Moyra: =But did you start off as a kitchen maid first?=
Tilly: Yes kitchen maid.

Here Moyra can be seen to try to encourage Tilly to fill in her particularistic biography by using common knowledge that people do not take on expert roles such as cook at the beginning of their career. She uses a developmental biography to do this, using 'first' and reiterating the word 'start'. Tilly does not respond to this everyperson developmental approach. Tilly's refusal to grasp this framework leads to further talk on Moyra's part where she asks further questions to get her line across. She repeats herself, using the phrase 'did you?' five times. A question expects an answer and if an answer is not forthcoming the question is often repeated in one way or another. In such circumstances a normal speaker is confronted with the prospect of becoming slightly overbearing if she is to establish a topic satisfactorily. And a very active confused speaker may refuse to see the relevance of an immediately prior turn and refer only to her own last remark. One can speculate that the more you pay attention only to what *you* have said in a conversation the easier it becomes to ignore its local management. You can say what you like. But repetition on the part of the normal speaker may be seen to be a form of embedded face-work which appeals to the normal proprieties of conversation: that speakers pay attention to each other. Repetition is a demand to be paid attention to, it is two-way face-work requiring Tilly to be in proper face and requiring her to attend to Moyra's face.

On another occasion Moyra's repeated questions appear to anticipate problems regarding face, rather than to be a corrective procedure:

Extract 4

- 1. Tilly: Mentholatum Deep Heat I'll show you (2.8) that's lovely ((Noises)) (14.0) I've had it here I must get home because my sister's there and I want to know if she's going to be there or what. I haven't seen her so *I MUST GET HOME TONIGHT*=
- 2. Moyra: =Alright=
- 3. Tilly: =And
[
- 4. Moyra: Where's your Deep Heat?
- 5. Tilly: Aye?
- 6. Moyra: Where is your bottle of Deep Heat? You were going to show it to me=
- 7. Tilly: =You what?=
8. Moyra: =Your bottle of Deep Heat=
9. Tilly: =Aye?=
10. Moyra: =Your bottle of Deep Heat=

Here Tilly begins by talking about the Deep Heat ointment and then abruptly changes topic to talk about her sister Martha who she thinks is alive and 'at

home' (Utterance 1). Moyra uses her turn (Utterance 2) to soothe Tilly rather than to challenge her: that is to say at this point she appears to be deferring to Tilly's choice of topic although not offering anything specific (like a question) that would encourage Tilly to follow it up. When Tilly uses her turn to say 'And', which presumably heralds more 'risky talk', Moyra uses her next turn to revert to the first topic of the Deep Heat ointment. This is not so obvious as a complete change of topic. It defers to one of Tilly's previous choices of topic but prefers one topic over the other. Moyra is then insistent, taking four turns to repeat her point.¹ She uses her turns to encourage Tilly to fetch the ointment, prioritising the here and now over Tilly's more global topic of complaint. So if a threatening topic can be deferred (or changed) then face will have been saved without any direct challenge to the person concerned; changing topic before someone has a chance to lose face performs an embedded function, in that the conversation does not have to focus explicitly on face (Jefferson: 1987). Also, insisting on maintaining a topic that has already been in play when threatened by a risky topic is a ploy which saves people from embarrassment. We might perhaps suggest that this sort of repetitive use of turn taking may be anticipatory face-work because it takes place when people are afraid of what they may hear. It can be a sort of protection of face on both sides, stopping Moyra from having to challenge Tilly again (which has implications for her own identity) and thus saving face for Tilly.

So Extracts 3 and 4 demonstrate the use of repetition on the part of a normal speaker to establish a proper and safe topic for the respondent. As an interviewer Moyra can be seen to have the task of introducing or following up on topics of interest to Tilly that will nevertheless allow both women to maintain face. By using repetition she insists on some of the proprieties of ordinary conversation: not least that the speakers should pay attention to what each says.

Stories and repetition

In this section I examine a repetitive story which Tilly tells and consider whether repetition on her part can be seen as a problem. Cheepen notes some potential features of a story in ordinary casual conversation (Cheepen 1988: 53). A story:

¹ Even though Tilly is slightly deaf and there are face problems relating to how many times you can repeat a question to a deaf person, Moyra still prefers these repeats over allowing the topic to revert to a more risky area.

- describes a state (of affairs), an event, and another state (of affairs);
- specifies the participants;
- indicates a temporal location;
- provides an evaluation.

Rayfield (1972) suggests that a story should not be too simple, too complex or confused and that it should have a beginning and ending. In his discussion of what a story is he also notes the fact that some stories can appear curiously unsatisfying to listeners and cites examples of protagonists changing, changing structures and inadequate chronologies as reasons for this.

However, in addition to providing a satisfactory structure an oral story teller must pay some attention to his or her audience. Sacks notes, for example, that people must get the floor to be able to tell a story and signpost that they may need several turns to do this (Sacks 1995a: 682). Jefferson, following Sacks, notes the structure that can be seen to exist in stories:

[...] story telling can involve a story preface with which a teller projects a forthcoming story, a next turn in which a coparticipant aligns himself as a story recipient, a next in which the teller produces the story, and a next in which story recipient talks by reference to the story.

(Jefferson 1978: 219)

Gaining the floor for a story is less of a problem in an interview than it is in a conversation. Here, Tilly has licence to talk, the short question and short statement turns of the interviewer are invitations to take and hold the floor. On the whole, the interviewer will opt to take turn during a story only for reasons of clarification, evaluation and so on, rather than wresting the floor from the teller to tell a second story. But we can also say that if interview talk is based on ordinary conversation then some of the same criteria will apply as for ordinary conversation, for example, a storyteller has to monitor what she says for whether it is news to the recipient and to make sure that as it unfolds it is recipient-designed (which should include monitoring for repetition, to ensure that any repetition adds some nuance to the story, dramatically or whatever).

The Deep Heat story begins after Moyra has asked about Tilly's health (the complete story is shown in Appendix 3)²:

² In Appendix 3 I have produced a transcript which misses out a substantial number of continuers on Moyra's part, in order to emphasise the structure of the story for the reader. Later in this chapter, in Extracts 7-11, a fuller transcription of parts of the story is given. However the numbering is that used in Appendix 3.

Extract 5

Moyra: [...] How have you been keeping? (.) How are you feeling?=
 Tilly: =Not too good I have rheumatism a lot=
 Moyra: I know (1.6) mmm=
 Tilly: =As long as I can keep on that's the chief thing. I've got some very good stuff.

Asking about Tilly's health is not only an introduction to a topic but also an invitation to her to choose a topic within a particular spectrum. Moyra's invitation might be seen as an opening sequence and could be responded to on a single word basis. However, placed as it is well away from the beginning of the conversation it is easier to see it as a genuine request for a named topic to be taken up and possibly as an invitation to tell a story. Tilly takes it as a request to choose a topic within the range of 'health' topics and introduces the subject of Mentholum Deep Heat Ointment. In the case of this speaker 'I've got some good stuff' can be seen as the pre-announcement of a story.³ It offers some information but promises more in that what the 'stuff' is, is not specified.

Basically the story is as follows: Tilly goes to the doctor's for some ointment for her rheumatism. She is given a tiny tin of greasy ointment which spoils her clothes. She goes along to Boots the chemists and buys some Deep Heat ointment having ascertained that it is a preparation many people buy. It is not greasy, she finds it very good and resolves not to go to the doctor's again for such a preparation. The epilogue to the story, as it were, is to show the product to Moyra to demonstrate its qualities, encouraging her to use it and to recommend it to other people. The episode contains many of the characteristics of a story: a hero, a villain, trials and tribulations, and a resolution which vindicates the hero and is not therefore in its basic form unsatisfying (Propp: 1968, Rayfield: 1972). The structure of the story is binary: it is a before and after story. Tilly frequently uses the device of comparing the first product (from the doctor's) with the second product (the Deep Heat), drawing favourable comparisons for the latter, so items in the story are grouped together to perform a specific evaluative function.

However, as noted earlier, a storyteller needs to pay attention not only to the structure of the story *per se* but to its unfolding in terms of the hearer. Some stories are in some respects news.⁴ But as the story is told, even if it is

³ For some other confused speakers it could be seen as a closing down: for example, Mrs Pugh, whom I discussed in Chapter 4, would have been unlikely to follow up such a statement with a story.

⁴ Stories told to children may not be news, particularly ones they want to hear every night in order that they can join in. Also, some stories may become part of someone's repertoire and acceptable to

news, the hearer becomes knowledgeable about the event. In an article on forgetfulnesss as an interactive resource Goodwin (1987) discusses how speakers talk when they are in the company of people who were also present at the events being talked about. He suggests that what might be seen as amendments or corrections to a conversation such as ‘What was that guy’s name?’ serve the purpose of acknowledging that another speaker present was at the events being reported: he refers to this other speaker as a *knowing recipient* (Goodwin 1987: 118). I want to elaborate this idea of the knowing recipient and to try to develop it in relation to the telling of a story.

When a story is to be told about an event different sorts of people may be present: those who were at the event and those who were not. And the storyteller may or may not know which others present were at the event. Thus, the start point of recounting of an event or situation may be represented on the following grid:

Figure 1: Knowing and not knowing: the start of a story

	Recipient was there	Recipient was not there
Speaker knows	1	2
Speaker does not know	3	4

There are a number of positions that the storyteller can take. Each cell represents a starting point for the teller regarding how to unfold the story. For example, if Cell 1 represents the start point, the storyteller can draw in the knowing recipient asking for his or her reminiscences of the event. In relation to Cell 2 the storyteller can begin the story as news. If the storyteller does not know whether someone has been there or not, (Cells 3 and 4), again he or she is likely to begin the story as news or to try to establish whether the recipient is ‘knowing’. In the former case the knowing listener has the choice to remain silent and risk problems of face if the storyteller starts romancing, or deviates from the listener’s recall of the event or discovers that he or she is a knowing recipient: or to reveal that he or she knows i.e. to make a statement which throws some light on their own identity as a knowing recipient.

In the situation of the story in question Cell 2 should be the beginning point for the teller. At the start of the story the speaker knows that the hearer

significant others as likely to be told quite often. In these circumstances there are indicators that such a story is not news: groans from the hearers ‘Oh no not again’ and so on.

knows nothing of it. During the unfolding of the story, however, the hearer gradually becomes a knowing recipient. This process may be facilitated by the hearer asking questions to indicate what she has not heard that she considers pertinent, and by offering evaluations which confirm her as a knowing recipient. And so, as the recipient contributes to the story, she offers information about what Goodwin calls her discourse identity (Goodwin 1987: 118). Thus in this story we find Moyra asking a number of questions:

Extract 6

Where did you get that from?

How much does it cost you? Is it expensive?

How much does it cost?

When did you get that?

When did you get that?

When?

Such questions might be referred to as product specifications in the sense that Moyra is trying to pin down some practicalities: they are questions about what she has not heard that may be seen to fill out the story for her. They contextualise many details of the story and attempt to elicit a more structured story, perhaps one in line with the discourse identity she sees as proper to Tilly as the teller of the story.

However, the story goes on for nearly two hundred turns and is really a series of presentations of the same story (in which the doctor's ointment comes out unfavourably) told with a few variations. In terms of Rayfield's analysis, if seen as one long story it is problematic because it does not have an end; if seen as a number of stories then we can suggest that being told the same thing again and again in close proximity is unsatisfying for Moyra as a knowing recipient. For the listener, the later stories are no longer relevant or informative because nothing new and pertinent is being added. I cite a few extracts below:

Extract 7⁵

19. Tilly:	That's lovely if you've got rheumatism or anything like that=
Moyra:	=Is it? =
Tilly	=Yes and the heat that give out and it's clean now I went to the doctor's (.) before I get that=
Moyra:	=Yes=

⁵ The turn numbers in the left hand column of extracts 7 -11, indicate the point at which these utterances occur in the whole story.

Tilly: =And he gave me some old greasy stuff *OOOh* my dear I messed up my vest and my night dress up=

Extract 8

49. Tilly: I though miself *whatever* muck have I got here but I soon washed it all off and threw the whole tin in the bin (.) I thought miself let me have some decent stuff and went and got that=

Moyra: =Mmmm.
(.)

Tilly: And that put on I was that take all the pain away you know if you've got a headache or anything=

Extract 9

75. Tilly: No I don't know it but that is the best stuff I've ever had (.) and you know it take all the pain away=

Moyra: =Does it?=
Tilly: =And you just go to sleep it's the finest thing out=

Moyra: =Lovely=

Tilly: =And my limbs are loose and everything=

Moyra: =Yes=

Tilly: =And I can move, twice now you get I got the stuff from the doctor (.) and that warn't no good at all and that messed up my night dress and all grease *ooh I thought a miself*.

Extract 10

103. Tilly: No that's why I don't mind buying stuff like that but when you get that (.) I had some stuff from the doctor *oh* and that was I I grea *oh* mucky old stuff=

Moyra: =Was it?=
Tilly: =Messed up my vest and night dress I had to soak em afterwards.

Extract 11

151. Tilly: I keep them ((Aspirins)) by me and the stuff to ri rub on Deep Heat that stuff=

Moyra: =Mmm=

Tilly: =And that take all the pain out of my limbs if they're swollen or that doctor's stuff was full of grease and *oh* I thought to myself my vest and night-dress was messed up I thought this is rubbish stuff so I never go I won't go *it's a waste of time to go*.

As the repetitions continue we can see that Moyra is in an increasingly parlous situation. Her own face becomes threatened. Tilly, however, appears to be oblivious to the fact that as time goes on Moyra had heard most elements of the story before. She does not orient to Moyra's discourse identity as a knowing recipient.

As Levinson notes, conversational participants are expected to monitor throughout a conversation and to tie up all the ends: if a topic is reintroduced it needs to be given a new slant (Levinson 1983: 315). It is not acceptable to introduce the same topic without variation or elaboration as news. Repetition is acceptable in separate conversations: one can repeat something one said in an earlier conversation in a later conversation, but repetition has to be

handled very carefully within the same conversation. Tilly's monitoring of the conversation as a whole and of her own talk in particular appears to be minimal. She can do local management of the conversation on a turn-by-turn basis, but does not accommodate to the fact that she has already told a particular story earlier in the conversation. Each repetition is, for her, a fresh rendition of the story. And, of course, repeating elements of a story, mindless of the hearer, adds to the volume of talk of the confused speaker.

One device that Moyra uses to try to facilitate Tilly orienting to her discourse identity as a knowing recipient is to introduce new topics. This is evident, to some extent, in the questions I cited in Extract 6, which are asking for information about things that she has not heard before about the story. But Moyra also attempts to change topic as well:

Extract 12

- 31 And what about your headaches?
 141 Who is your doctor Tilly?
 157 For your headaches do you take those? When do you get a
 headache?
 161 You used to cook didn't you?

Again these tactics are similar to those of the embedded corrections I discussed earlier (Jefferson: 1987). Attempts to forestall the story do not become explicit interactional business as they would have if Moyra had told Tilly that she was repeating herself: to do this, however, would have been explicitly to challenge face. But none of these attempts work and Moyra's voice appears to have less and less energy as the story is repeated again and again. The story is finally brought to an abrupt halt when Tilly says:

Extract 13

- Tilly: That's splendid I can recommend that to anybody (.) In fact my sister
 Martha (1.0)what's at home now er=
 Moyra: =*MARTHA*?=
 Tilly: =Yes=
 Moyra: =No where's Martha?=
 Tilly: =Martha=
 Moyra: =Martha=
 Tilly: =Mm she's at home now=
 Moyra: =No she's not=
 Tilly: *Oh no* of course she's not=
 Moyra: =Yes=
 Tilly: I can't forget her you know.

At this point Moyra intervenes quite sharply. Her voice is energetic. She explicitly mobilises her discourse identity as a knowing recipient of some of Tilly's identity, that her sister is dead. Here, the embedded nature of her

face-work in the main body of the story is replaced by explicit interactional work: a challenge to face. No longer is she willing to work within the structure offered by the telling of a story. So the story structure in which the story teller concludes the story is usurped. Rayfield discusses the accommodation that is made for whole stories to be told and cites examples of stories being told in episodes if they are too long to be told in one sitting (Rayfield: 1972). A *complete story*, then, appears to be an important feature of structure. Had Moyra not usurped the ending of the story it may never have ended if Tilly had been left to her own conversational devices.

Explicit face-work and knowledge

I now go on to look in more detail at explicit interactional face-work that takes place within this conversation. As I have already noted in Chapter 2, I listened to this tape and prepared the transcript hearing Moyra as the reliable participant and Tilly as the unreliable participant so that my interpretative framework here is of a *problem that Tilly generates*.⁶ Extract 14 illustrates some of the problems that arise in the conversation deriving from Tilly's construction of her own biography.

Extract 14

1. Tilly: Lily or somebody oh it's
- [
2. Moyra: Edith isn't I
3. Tilly: [Edi no I don't think Edie is no no=
4. Moyra: =mm=
5. Tilly: One or the other then I wanna get home I'd rather be in my own home / *WANNA BE* my o I'm 80 now=
- [
6. Moyra: I know]
7. Tilly: =And I think I ought to be in mi own home as I won't be here in anyway in a place like this=
8. Moyra: =But this is your flat dear Mrs Perkins lives underneath=
9. Tilly: =/ *KNOW* but I de I why should I be here? I'm I er I was made to work here that's when () the idea I got a home o mi own they now sent them chairs (.) there and brought that so now I haven't been home my sis I wanna know what is happening at the home *WHERE I COME FROM*.
10. Moyra: Well we'll have to find out are you going to put this on love?
- (.)
11. Tilly: I haven't got a kettle that leaks=
- [
12. Moyra: No no
13. Tilly: =So I th I gotta get another one.

⁶ It is interesting that if we were to hear Tilly as the reliable person instead it would be very easy to hear Moyra as confused.

14. Moyra: That's enough whoa.
[
15. Tilly: Aye?
16. Moyra: That's for two of us is that enough water for two of us?
17. Tilly: Yes I'll (put a drop more) I mean I don't know where I am where I stand or anything else about I haven't heard from Mrs Per not Mrs you know it ain't Mrs Per but I don't know I don't know what I'm go I wanna be () *WHY SHOULD I BE HERE?* ((Clanking of crockery)) I don't want to be here. Isn't I'm 80 and don't you think I ought to be?=
=((Very quiet)) Mmm.
18. Moyra: YES I DO.
19. Tilly: [
20. Moyra: I know mmm.
21. Tilly: I'm going to clean this kitchen the walls all down on Monday or so I thought (.) and so then everything would be alright=
=Yes=
22. Moyra: =And then then that's done then.
23. Tilly: [
24. Moyra: But this is all your stuff in here love.
25. Tilly: [Aye?=
26. Moyra: =All your (.) this is all your food and everything in the cupboards=
27. Tilly: =I know well I shan't I shall take it with me so I shan't leave nothing behind not in the food line so (you needn't worry)
[
28. Moyra: No.
29. Tilly: () I am er
[
30. Moyra: But that's your bedroom through there.
31. Tilly: Yeh.
[
32. Moyra: So and er because Martha used to live here before she died=
33. Tilly: =Aye?=
34. Moyra: =You and Martha used to live here before Martha died=
35. Tilly: Yes but my dear ((Exasperated)) *that's nothing to do with my sister dying* Martha never had anything=
36. Moyra: =But she used to live here=
37. Tilly: =Martha did not=
38. Moyra: =Yes she did Mrs Perkins told me=
39. Tilly: =Martha did not used to live *never never knowed this place at all*=
40. Moyra: ((Whisper)) Yes she did.
41. Tilly: =No she didn't ((Exasperated)) Martha won't come here my dear she don't when she went I got when she got a home of her own Martha and I share.
[
42. Moyra: I think you moved to this you see.
[
43. Tilly: What?=
44. Moyra: =You moved to this flat you see=
45. Tilly: =She did not=
46. Moyra: =Both of you did=
47. Tilly: =Aye?
48. Moyra: =Both of you did a while ago you both moved to the flat quite a long time ago=
49. Tilly: =No no my dear my my sister Martha had never been in this place ((Banging emphatically)) no and cause she's died now we know=
50. Moyra: =Mmm yeh=

51. Tilly: =Never *she's never been to this flat* ((Banging emphatically)) (2.0)
not at all ((Banging for 5.0)) she might have come if she's have been
to the (club) and come here but nothing else.

52. Moyra: [Yes.

In this extract the three main points of discussion are whether the flat in which the conversation is taking place is where Tilly lives; whether her sister Martha is dead or alive; and whether Martha used to live in this flat. Within these discussions there is a dissonance: whether Martha used to live in this flat does not seem to be connected with whether Tilly now lives in it. The whole discussion poses problems for both women since they are at odds over the status of the 'facts' as presented by each other.

Both women seem to be engaging in explicit interactional work relating to face. To Moyra, Tilly's statements are a demonstration that she is not presenting an acceptable line, her view of herself is not acceptable. Ordinary members know where they live and can recognise where they live when they are there. They know which close relatives are alive and which are dead (unless they have lost touch with them), and when not in the presence of their live relatives they assume, for working purposes, that they continue to be alive. Such biographical and life experience knowledge should not have to be talked about and should not emerge as a matter for dispute. And once they do, they immediately become issues requiring face-work on the part of the ordinary member. But Tilly's view of her own biography and situation is as tenacious as Moyra's. As far as Tilly is concerned she is presenting an acceptable line and she engages in face-work too, defending her line against challenges by someone who in conventional terms has less claim to know about these matters than she does. All of this is a basis for plenty of talk.

Tilly proposes a number of things that she intends to do. However, these intended actions are, in Moyra's opinion, based on false assumptions (i.e. Tilly's taken-for-granted is not the taken-for-granted of other members). For example, Tilly is going to clean the flat so she can leave with a clear conscience (Utterances 21-31). But Moyra points out that all this stuff in the flat is Tilly's (a statement beneath which lies a taken-for-granted assumption that we keep our stuff in our own homes: that if we say that this is our furniture people will assume we own or rent the flat). But Tilly does not make quite the same taken-for-granted assumption. Instead, she assumes that this is, indeed, all her stuff and that she knows your own stuff should be in your own flat and that she will take it with her when she goes to her own flat. Here Moyra's frame is accommodated within Tilly's frame of what is

going on, rather than being seen as a challenge to it. So Moyra's claims, which it might be suggested, can be seen as relevant support for a challenge to face for normal speakers, do not constrain Tilly – almost the reverse, they support her version of her face – and the dispute continues.

The face-work that goes on in this episode, it seems to me, is not really resolved when Tilly says that Martha is dead now (Utterance 49) because the statement does not seem to emerge from any prior work in the conversation. It is as though Tilly had just 'come to'. And this poses another problem for identity. Ordinary members know all the time that a relative is dead. It is not something one forgets, except perhaps in the first few days of mourning, when people may wake up in the morning and not remember. This would be generally be assumed to be a fixed aspect of one's identity.

This is to put a different gloss on the idea of the knowing recipient. Based on what she already knows, Moyra knows what she needs to hear and she needs to find a way for Tilly to present an identity that comes into line with this. And, as I have said, the issues at stake are, in the common understanding, not matters of opinion where a knowing recipient can be corrected: they are non-negotiable and consequential facts. If Moyra were to accept that Tilly does not live here and that Martha is alive it would have consequences for her relationship with the world, including Mrs Perkins who lives in the flat below! Moyra *cannot* accept Tilly's interpretation of the world.

So a number of identities are being contested here: not least Moyra as knowing recipient and Tilly as a displaced person with a live sister. How is the explicit interactional face work accomplished? The discussion is again characterised by repetition and also by the extensive use of dispreferred replies on the part of both women. I have already alluded to dispreferred answers in Chapter 2, citing work by Sacks, Schegloff, Bilmes and Pomerantz. Where there is a choice of conditionally relevant responses to a first pair part, these choices are not treated as equivalent by the responder: some are preferred over others. Typically, a preferred response is a short unqualified acceptance to an invitation whereas a dispreferred response involves a hedge, and some kind of account (Levinson 1983: 307). I want to note that one of the features of dispreferred answers is that they require some qualification over and above a basic rejection, refusal or denial. Thus, by engaging in dispreferred answers speakers usually generate more talk than if they had used preferred answers.

In Extract 14 we find a fairly frequent construction of statement-reply (adjacency pairs as identified by Goffman: 1981) and these too can be considered within the framework of preference structure, although while a request may be followed by an acceptance or a refusal (both being conditionally relevant) a reply to a statement allows perhaps a greater degree of latitude. Nevertheless one use of a statement is that it can be offered as an assertion, and in that case we can see that a preferred reply is an agreement with it and a dispreferred reply is a counter-assertion. Thus, I think that a number of Moyra's replies can be seen as dispreferred, even though they emerge from statements on Tilly's part rather than from questions, for example utterances 8, 24, 30, 36, 38, 46 and 48. Most of these are preceded by 'but', which indicates to the other speaker that an alternative assertion is being introduced.

Tilly's counter-assertions rarely contained hedges. On only one occasion does she use 'but' (Utterance 35) and here it is 'Yes but' followed by 'my dear', which acts as a sort of hedge that can be heard as a diminution of Moyra, thereby discounting her answer. This response is one which challenges the relevance of Moyra's preceding statement, and thus challenges her face.

The use of dispreferred answers is accompanied by repeats of the argument on the part of both women, so that each entrenches her own position. The talk is lengthy because it centres on dispreferred answers (adding to the length on utterances) and also because it repeats (adding to the number of utterances). And there seems to be a tension here in that one thing that dispreferred answers could be seen to do is to add to the density of the discourse, while one thing repeats do is to make space – to make the discourse less dense. I suspect that this tension may well be at the root of the notion of what it is to be 'talkative'.

This explicit interactional work relating to face is brought about by the fact that the problem apparently *cannot* be dealt with by an embedded strategy. It is not possible in an embedded way to circumnavigate such serious issues. Correction cannot be slipped into the conversation by stealth. Again, I would suggest that this contributes to the notion of this being a very 'talkative' section of the interview. Embedded correction work can be seen as a singularly elegant and economical way of handling correction, and embedded face-work is the same, deserving such descriptions as 'tactful',

'subtle' and so on. However, when it becomes explicit interactional business, face-work is less economical, less elegant and becomes marked behaviour.

Occasioned activity

I want now to continue the theme of too much talk by looking at a number of stretches of domestic talk involving the Bruners. For Mrs Bruner many ordinary taken-for granted aspects of daily life are mysteries that she cannot solve alone. I illustrate a number of examples of this inability on her part to 'get on' with daily life' and in how this is manifested in a rather large volume of talk.

Summonses and answers

Much of the talk on the tapes Mr Bruner recorded is not strictly speaking conversation. It does not, for example, contain openings and closings, which Schegloff and Sacks suggest are two of the essential criteria of conversation. Instead, what takes place is a state of what these authors call incipient talk:

[...] there can be silence after a speaker's utterance which is neither an attributable silence nor a termination, which is seen as neither the suspension nor the violation of the basic features [of the talk]. These are adjournments, and seem to be done in a manner different from closings. Persons in such a continuing state of incipient talk need not begin new segments with closing sections and terminal exchanges.

(Schegloff and Sacks 1974: 262)

Nevertheless, although the Bruners' talk may be without openings in the sense of greetings, it is necessary for the couple to focus the interaction as talk resumes. The extracts I have chosen are examples of one form of adjacency pair: the summons and answer. Examples of this are often generated by Mr and Mrs Bruner when they are in separate rooms, and so the first pair parts stand as devices to reactivate interaction again after Mr Bruner has been physically and interactionally absent (taking it from Mrs Bruner's perspective as the summoner).

Schegloff notes several significant features about the summons and answer as an adjacency pair:

- 'Upon a summons an answer is expectable' (Schegloff 1972a: 364), moreover, an answer is conditionally relevant and if it is absent then this is a meaningful absence;
- in the completion of a summons and answer, the answer must directly follow the summons (compare this to the fact that an answer may lie

several sentences after a question, or after a silence of a considerable length of time, and still be construed as an answer) (p. 365);

- the summoner is obligated to speak a second time after the conclusion of the summons/answer that forms a first adjacency pair (p. 364): in this sense there are three elements – summons, answer and follow-up by the summoner;
- there is a limit to the number of times that a summoner may summon without receiving a reply (although Schegloff does not formulate a rule for just how many times this first pair part can be repeated) (p. 365).

We may also suggest other significant features of a summons. A summons is likely to take place in a situation where the speaker of the first pair part knows it is realistic that the potential speaker of the second pair part can hear and respond. It must be appropriate to the occasion. It must make the right claim on the person summoned, given the context.

Thus, a successful summons conforms to a specific conversational format and observes the proprieties of face for those concerned. However, we can see that there are many common social situations when summons and answer sequences do not quite conform to this happy state. For example, people may not reply to a summons. Schegloff notes:

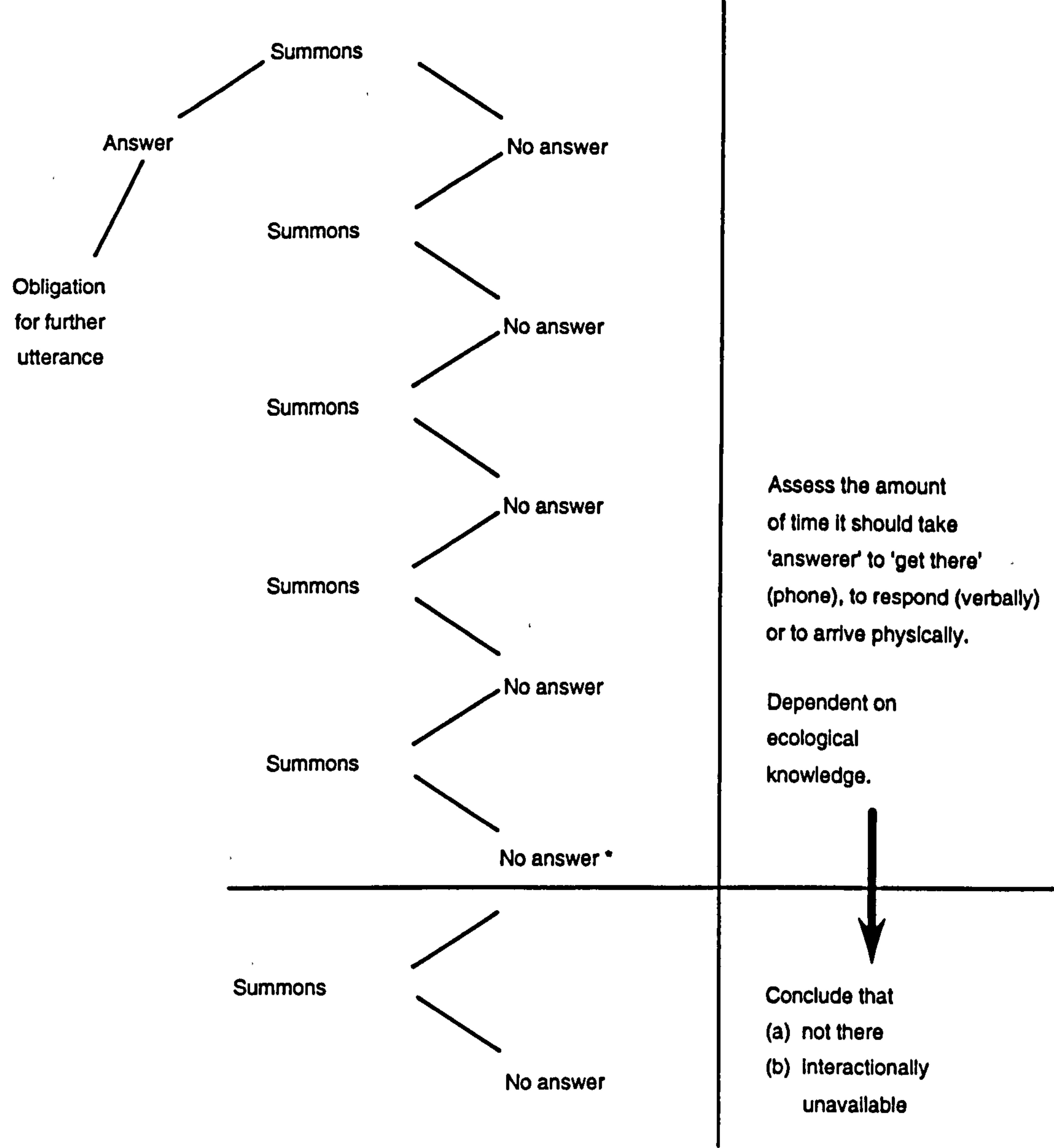
A member of the society may not “naively choose” not to answer a summons. The culture provides that a variety of “strong inferences” can be drawn from the fact of the official absence of an answer, and any member who does not answer does so at the peril of one of those inferences being made.

(Schegloff 1972a: 367)

A summoner who gets no response when apparently the summoned person can hear and has the capacity to answer may infer a meaningful absence: that he or she does not have any authority with the other person, that their own identity has turned out not to accommodate the authority that they had previously thought (or hoped) they had, etc. An aspect of identity has been found wanting. The person who refuses to answer is making a comment on the identity of the summoner. Parents whose young children do not do as they say, teachers whose pupils will not do their bidding, both put at risk authoritative aspects of their identities. Since successful summoning is an integral part of these identities, it can be seen that they face a real dilemma in needing to continue with exactly that interaction which shows up their inadequacies.

In the absence of a response, the summoner is faced with the problem of deciding how long to keep summoning. Schegloff outlines the possibility of *no answer, no person* and notes that although he has not formulated a rule for this that this conclusion is generally drawn after three to five summonses. However, there is an interim stage before this conclusion may be reached and which I illustrate in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Length of summoning sequences



*Schegloff suggests 3 to 5 times as the maximum one can summons without answer

There is a point after one or two summonses and no answer that the summoner must try to construct what is going on. For example, when telephoning, one makes assumptions about how long it takes to get to the telephone. In some circumstances summoners will know this, in others they will be unfamiliar with the place they are telephoning. There must, however, come a cut off-point after which one must draw other conclusions about the absence of an answer. If the person seems not to be there the summoner may stop. People do not continue to summon indefinitely until the person returns physically. A telephone summons illustrates this. You put the telephone down after eleven rings because either the person at the other end is not there (and you cannot continue because what about if they have gone away on their holidays for three weeks) or they are there and have decided not to reply. In the latter case continuing to allow the telephone to ring for an hour may be seen as an unwarranted insistence that a reply should be forthcoming. In some circumstances even though you may infer that someone is there at the other end of the telephone you nevertheless stop summoning. For example, when you telephone the Royal Free Hospital, you may conclude after eleven rings that although it is clear that the hospital cannot possibly be out, it is nevertheless interactionally unavailable in the form of a jammed switchboard.

There are, however, circumstances when an extended series of summonses may be made without the receipt of an answer or the loss of face. When people are in desperate straits they may call to 'anyone' to respond: when they are 'lost on the moors' they may call for hours, maintaining, perhaps, an expectation that others are interactionally available: that the search party has set out or that someone is passing by, and so on. Because the interactional availability of others cannot be specified the summoner can continue to summon for long periods because they are not summoning a specific person but rather 'anyone' within earshot. And, for searchers, extensive repetition of summonses is legitimate because each could be seen to be a new occasion for the summons (as in 'We've tried over there, now let's try over here').

The complexities of interactional and physical availability raise issues about different types of summonses. We may summon:

- expecting the summoned person to make a verbal response (summons to interactional availability);

- expecting someone to get themselves into our presence (summons to physical presence).

This distinction has important implications for what would constitute the successful completion of a summoning sequence. In one case a verbal response is sufficient, whereas in the other it is not. And, closely associated with this, are implications for face. All first pair parts in adjacency pairs carry implications about the identity both of the speaker and of the person being addressed. Not everyone is allowed to ask questions in some contexts, and for any individual there may be others to whom they cannot direct questions. And it seems that summonses are a very demanding kind of action, in terms of the relationship they set up between the summoner and the summoned. Moreover, the second type of summons identified above is particularly demanding, always potentially leading to complaints about being 'at someone's beck and call'. Within a relationship where the parties are treated as interactionally equal, both types of summons may be regarded as legitimate, although there is likely to be some conception of over-use. Any inequality in the statuses of the participants would lead to a sharp decline in the appropriateness of the summons in one direction especially those of the second kind. A lower status participant summoning a higher status participant can threaten the status hierarchy. Moreover, summonses can threaten to turn an equal relationship into a hierarchical one. In the case of the Bruners we can reasonably assume that this is an equal relationship, or that Mr Bruner would normally be accorded higher status, given continuing patriarchal influences within families especially those of the generation to which the Bruners belong.

However, there are other considerations that go into judgements about the legitimacy of summonses, beside the relationship between the participants. One is some measure of the urgency and significance of the matter that the summons is dealing with. Some matters are so urgent and important that even those at the bottom of status hierarchies would be allowed to summons those at the top. Another relevant factor is the frequency of summonses. Any particular summons is likely to be judged in the context of other behaviour and the implications that carries for the identities of the participants. Frequent use of summonses, especially when the justification for them is weak, is likely to become an interactional problem for one or both sides. One strategy that a summoned participant might use to deal with this is, of course, to stop responding to the summonses. And that

possibility is one that the summoner will usually be aware of. However, it is not, of course, the only explanation for there being no response.

So out of the initial notion of summons and answer as an adjacency pair there is a chain of possible outcomes. The strong expectation is of an answer. The persistence with which an answer is sought is, among other things, an indicator of the strength of expectation of a second pair part. The range of possible outcomes indicates that quite complex interpretive work has to be done on the part of the summoner in order to carry out a summons.

Consider, therefore, the following extract:

Extract 15

1. Mrs Bruner: Ooh dear (1.5) ((Sound like door))
Da:ve (1.7) Dave.
2. Mr Bruner: ((From afar)) Yes love.
(2.0)
3. Mrs Bruner: Oooh dear (1.4) (they do) (2.3) Dave (2.5) Dave (2.6) Dave (2.3)
Dave ((Low)) (1.2) (they do).
(1.4)
4. Mr Bruner: ((From afar)) What do you want love
5. Mrs Bruner: Dave ()
6. Mr Bruner: ((Nearer and irritated)) What do you want?
7. Mrs Bruner: Dave ()
8. Mr Bruner: ((Here)) What do you want?
9. Mrs Bruner: (Cover mi feet) ain't it.

Utterances 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and 7 and 8 form four summons/answer adjacency pairs; Utterance 9 is what Mrs Bruner says to Mr Bruner when he comes into physical presence. From the noises on the recording it is evident that Mr Bruner is not in the same room as his wife at the beginning of the episode. It is reasonably common for a summons to take place when the protagonists are not co-present. Indeed, Mrs Bruner's intonation, with an upward lift towards the end of her husband's name in Utterance 1, and the register of her voice, would be inappropriate for summoning someone in the same room. The register of Mrs Bruner's voice diminishes in the second adjacency pair (Utterances 3 and 4) and it might be assumed that this is only a pseudo-summons which echoes the first (not loud enough to catch someone from afar), perhaps not really a summons at all but self-talk, that talk we address to ourselves without the expectation that it will have any interactional consequences (Goffman:1981). In Extract 15 Mrs Bruner calls her husband eight times. Although Mr Bruner is out of the room from Utterances 1 to 6, he does answer, indicating his interactional availability. In the case of a summons requesting such availability, this response should have been followed by the obligatory third part of the summons. However, Mrs Bruner

continues summoning. This implies her summons was concerned with bringing about Mr Bruner's physical presence. However, even given this, simply to continue summoning without providing any hint that there is a justification for this can be seen as being very 'demanding' behaviour. And this demandingness relates not just to personal convenience but also has face implications. It threatens to reduce the relationship to that of a mistress and servant, where the summoned person is under obligation to abandon any other demands on their time.⁷

As I noted earlier, a summons can be justified by the urgency and significance of what prompts it. However, it is not easy to understand from the tape or the transcript what prompted the summons by Mrs Bruner on this occasion. If it was that she was cold and needed her feet covered, this could conceivably be regarded as urgent and important for her, and perhaps, given their relationship also for Mr Bruner. However, perhaps only royalty in days long gone would summon servants to carry out personal service tasks that they could in principle do for themselves. If Mrs Bruner sees this degree of subservience on Mr Bruner's part as appropriate, then her challenge to his face is quite emphatic, imperious even! However, it may be given that for some reason she sees herself as not being able to cover her own feet, in which case the summons to physical presence can be seen as justified, although the refusal to acknowledge Mr Bruner's interactional availability early in the episode remains problematic.

So the summons and answer is one major way in this household that focused interaction begins. Mrs Bruner initiates many first pair parts of this sort. Moreover, the frequency and repetition of her summonses imply that she seeks Mr Bruner's interactional availability for longer than any normal speaker would do. Sometimes her summonses are not answered, presumably because Mr Bruner is out of earshot or is choosing not to be interactionally available. Indeed, he observes in one of my interviews that he finds her summonses disruptive because it means that he cannot get the housework done. In the following extract I have put summonses on separate lines in order to emphasise the patterns:

⁷ This is the crux of Joseph Losey's film 'The Servant' where the changing relationship of master and servant is played out through the changing patterns of summoning. At the outset the servant answers summonses in an exemplary fashion emphasising that his requirements are as nothing. By the end of the film, however, he has undermined the right of the master to do any summoning whatsoever.

Extract 16

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. Mrs Bruner: | Dave (3.2) |
| 2. | Dave (3.4) |
| 3. | Where am I? |
| 4. | Dave (3.2) |
| 5. | Dave (3.3) |
| 6. | Dave (3.5) |
| 7. | Dave (3.9) |
| 8. | Where am I? (3.8) |
| 9. | Dave (3.4) |
| 10. | Dave (3.4) |
| 11. | Dave (3.7) |
| 12. | Dave (3.3) |
| 13. | Dave (4.4) |
| 14. | Dave 3.8) |
| 15. | Dave mmm (2.9) |
| 16. | Dave (3.8) |
| 17. | Dave (4.1) |
| 18. | Dave (4.2) |
| 19. | ((Telephone rings) (1.9) |
| 20. | ((Ringing)) Dave (4.6) |
| 21. | ((Ringing)) Dave (8.5) |
| 22. | ((Ringing)) Dave (3.1) oh dear (6.9) |
| 23. | ((Ringing)) Eheheh (4.3) |
| 24. | Dave (6.0) ((Telephone stops ringing)) |
| 25. | Dave (3.2) |
| 26. | <i>Oh please</i> (2.7) |
| 27. | Dave (4.1) |
| 28. | Dave (4.4] |
| 29. | Dave (3.6) |
| 30. | Dave (4.2) |
| 31. | Dave (4.3) |
| 32. | Dave (4.2) |
| 33. | Aohh ((Possible tape break?)) |
| 34. | (Can I stay in bed) a bit longer? |
| 35. Mr Bruner: | Yes OK. |

In this long series of summonses there are some regularities; for example, the timings are fairly regular until the telephone rings. After this Mrs Bruner's calls to her husband lose their rhythm. To an ordinary member it might seem that the telephone ringing would present an intervening summons that possibly has precedence. Perhaps the call is seen in this way by Mrs Bruner too: the disruption of the timings of her calls may suggest this. Although a number of episodes of summoning in the recordings Mr Bruner made are superficially similar, the gaps between the summonses vary from episode to episode. For example, in Extract 15 when the sounds on the tape suggest that Mr Bruner might well have merely gone into the next room, the gaps between her summonses are far shorter: but in Extract 15 when the noises suggest that Mr Bruner may be downstairs the gaps are longer. This indicates that in some instances there may be some residual ecological work going on

when Mrs Bruner thinks her husband is only in the next room as opposed to downstairs (and thus that he is interactionally more available).

When Mr Bruner does arrive after his wife has called his name 27 times she asks him if she can stay in bed a bit longer.⁸ It will be noted that this time, there is no apparent justification for requiring Mr Bruner's physical presents at all. This is the most 'demanding' kind of summons of all in terms of face.

In both Extracts 15 and 16 Mrs Bruner does not begin her request until her husband arrives. So while the rules of summons and answer may have been 'bent' a little she still retains a sense of agency i.e. that the business proper of the summons does not begin until her husband is interactionally available even though her definition of interactional availability seems to be related to physical co-presence. I have implied so far that a summons to physical presence may be seen as perhaps one which has more status and identity implications than a summons to interactional availability, and particularly a summons to physical presence that ignores the interactional availability of the summoned person. This is because it gives the summoned person no leeway to deal with the summons while they are doing what they are already doing. They have to leave off and orient totally to the summoner. Mrs Bruner's conflation of a requirement for both interactional availability and physical co-presence can be seen to heighten this challenge to Mr Bruner's identity and face.

In both extracts, there is a real disjunction between the degree of distress apparent in Mrs Bruner's summonses and the question she asks when her husband arrives. The question eventually put is very ordinary and undistressed, the moment of stress appears to have passed. This would suggest that Mrs Bruner appears to have difficulty in maintaining a line from the beginning to the conclusion of a summoning sequence. I have suggested already that the sort of summons sequences that She engages in threaten the face of others. But, of course, they threaten her face too. There are ways of handling summonses that can lead to pejorative assessments by others. The degree to which Mrs Bruner uses summonses might be summed up by the phrase 'crying wolf'. While there are points in the local management of any conversation when some types of adjacency pairs are more suitable devices

⁸ It is possible there is a break in the tape recording here: the fact that it may be a voice-activated tape recorder makes it difficult to tell the difference between a sudden call and a tape break.

than others there also come points in conversations (and over a period of time) between speakers who are familiar with each other when some types of adjacency pairs are seen to be inappropriate by at least one party in the talk. One example of this is when children ask questions interminably and parents get exasperated. Another is when the summons is devalued by being used too often in the wrong circumstances, as seems to be the case with some of Mrs Bruner's summonses. For a normal speaker such as Mr Bruner, presumably, over time the experience has been that the subsequent justification his wife presents for the summons is not sufficient to take it seriously. And, perhaps, for face purposes he has decided not always to be at her 'beck and call'. To this end he chooses simply to be interactionally unavailable. This is an effective strategy for him since he knows that responses 'from afar' are pointless and that interactional obligations only begin with physical co-presence!

There is another way of looking at it though: crying wolf could be seen as a way of confirming one's existence rather than merely gaining attention. In some senses this compares with my earlier discussion about someone lost on the moors. Such calls for help are not merely calls for assistance they are summonses for someone to acknowledge the lost person's existence. Continued existence is dependent on acknowledgement of the self by others. Summoning help on the moors would be unlikely to be interpreted by others as 'crying wolf'. As the person on the moors needs someone else to facilitate their continuing existence so perhaps does Mrs Bruner. If no one is there with her she may not know where she is (or even perhaps who she is). This is almost to invert Schegloff's maxim, 'no answer, no person', rather it might be 'no person, no answer' (Schegloff: 1972a). If every summons is a need to reaffirm one's existence, then using constant summonses to do this would seem to be a workable strategy, if somewhat wearing for the other party. The arrival of the other party may then be sufficient to confirm one's existence, the existential question may not have to be asked when summoner and summoned are face-to face. But this does place the summoner in a difficult situation; normal members would be required to have a 'good enough' reason for having made the summons. (It is rather like children not wanting to admit that they are afraid of the dark when summoning parents to their bedroom a dozen times an evening: it is always that the bed is rumpled or a glass of water is required.) And, of course, Mrs Bruner does always have a reason (the obligatory third statement), the conclusion to her summoning activity is structurally normal in this sense. Overall, though, in this

household there is more talk than might be expected for an occasioned activity like summoning and answering, and much of the responsibility for this extra volume of talk lies with Mrs Bruner.

Routine activities

There are many events and routine activities that involve questions on Mrs Bruner's part that I think would be unlikely to be asked by ordinary members. In this section I want primarily to discuss the occasion of lunch time in the Bruner household, but I begin with two excerpts that show, again, how alien ordinary everyday life seems to be to Mrs Bruner:

Extract 17

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Mrs Bruner: | What do I put on now? |
| Mr Bruner: | Your bedsocks. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Bedsocks are these? |
| Mr Bruner: | Yeh lift your foot up. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Oh I don't know mi duck. |
| Mr Bruner: | Lift your foot up () |
| Mrs Bruner: | Dave Dave. |
| Mr Bruner: | There you go. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Here? |
| Mr Bruner: | That's right yeh that's it. |
| Mrs Bruner: | This me? |
| Mr Bruner: | That's right. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Dave. |
| Mr Bruner: | Yeh. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Which side? |
| Mr Bruner: | This is your side look. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Here? Are you sure? |
| Mr Bruner: | Yeh. |
| Mrs Bruner: | How many pillows do I have? I don't have all these. |
| Mr Bruner: | You do as a rule. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Aye? Oh I never want all these Dave do I? Look here. |
| Mr Bruner: | Well you well I'll take one away and then you'll see. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Take away aye. |
| Mr Bruner: | Here you are now see how you like it you had the four last night. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Eyeyeey aye I don't know mi duck I can't get mi legs in. |
| Mr Bruner: | Here you are. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Oh oh oh. |
| Mr Bruner: | Yes there you go. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Am I in? |
| Mr Bruner: | Yes. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Dave am I in, love? |
| Mr Bruner: | Yes. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Oh that's better. |
| Mr Bruner: | Yes. |
| Mrs Bruner: | Al hey hey mmm () it's awful mi duck eeny meeny
miny mo Dave. |
| Mr Bruner: | There you go. |

The occasion of going to bed and getting up, judging from the tapes Mr Bruner recorded, are ones which Mrs Bruner cannot achieve without physical

and organisational assistance. Here, Mrs Bruner does not appear to recognise the sequences of events that are commonplace in going to bed or in dealing with common equipment associated with bedtime. Moreover, she does not appear to be able to monitor her own body to the extent of knowing whether she is in bed or not (on another occasions she asks if her feet are in bed). However, she does appear to understand the occasion to the extent that she knows that the end result of the operation should be that she is properly in bed. All of this is a cause for talk since she asks questions and makes comments on issues and routines that would not normally generate talk, as the following extract again shows:

Extract 18

Mrs Bruner:	When do I get up?
Mr Bruner:	((From afar)) What?
Mrs Bruner:	Dave Dave Dave Dave where are you?
Mr Bruner:	((From afar)) I'm here I'm coming.
Mrs Bruner:	Dave where are you?
Mr Bruner:	(From afar)) I'm in the kitchen love.
Mrs Bruner:	() Have I got to get up?
Mr Bruner:	((Exasperated)) It's bedtime now.
Mrs Bruner:	Aye?
Mr Bruner:	It's bedtime.
Mrs Bruner:	Is it night?
Mr Bruner:	Yes.
Mrs Bruner:	Are you sure?
Mr Bruner:	Yes.

Here Mrs Bruner does not appear to be able to recognise for herself what time of day it is and therefore needs to ask if she has to get up. Recognising the time of day provides a substantial resource for ordinary members to use in order to commence various sorts of occasioned activity; though the sequence shows that Mrs Bruner is not entirely lost to a sense of occasion in that she knows that night is when you go to bed. Here again problems with ordinary occasions call for talk which focuses on aspects of the world that are taken for granted by most normal members. And it is interesting, that when she asks Mr Bruner whether he is sure it is night, this challenges even whether such knowledge should be ordinary taken-for-granted knowledge.

Lunch time too poses problems. The Bruner's lunch time is an event, we might suppose, that involves 'doing being ordinary' (Sacks: 1984). 'Doing being ordinary' includes doing being 'the right sort of ordinary' for a particular occasion. However, in this episode there are a number of ways in which Mrs Bruner can be seen to be failing to live up to the requirements of the situation. The complete transcription of this occasion is in Appendix 4. Of course, any talk which takes place at a social lunch time may well sound

quite chaotic to an outsider.⁹ But generally much apparently chaotic talk can be contextualised by the accompanying actions. Even allowing for the fact that lunch time is likely to be quite activity-based, and that in relation to these data I do not have access to the physical action that was going on in a more than speculative way, nevertheless Mrs Bruner's deviance and Mr Bruner's attempts to prevent and deal with it are very obvious.

Speier's analysis of meal times involving children is a useful starting point for this analysis, since he outlines a number of factors which delineate a meal. For one thing it is 'the direct result of the planful preparation of its participants' (Speier, 1969: 159). They gather together in a routine way and at some point following the arrival of at least some of them the meal officially begins. While the meal is the main activity of the event, as Speier suggests, *other* activities may occur simultaneously. However:

It is the occasioned feature of the activity that provides its members with public understandings about the event as a sequential and temporal set of arrangements revolving around a main activity. The character of interactional and conversational development is influenced by the participants' orientation to that main purpose. Their talk is organized around that purpose in various ways, as a kind of dominant theme in the interactional structure of the occasion.

(Speier 1969: 160-161)

There is, or should be, a public understanding of the events, their sequence and the chronology which surrounds dinner. Conversational topics that do not relate to the main event nevertheless have to be developed within its parameters. The meal is a demarcated occasion. In terms of focused interaction one would expect participants to pay attention to the occasioned aspects of the meal.

So in the case of Mr and Mrs Bruner's lunch time we can expect a certain amount of occasioned activity relating to the meal. We can also expect that there are ways of handling talk not occasioned by the meal itself. At one extreme, we have the Trappist monastery where only occasioned activity takes place, and at the other end we have the buffet dinner party where the guests may not even have to address the issue of the meal if they do choose not to do so. For many people lunch may be a quiet occasion. Indeed, participants may effectively be in a state of incipient talk from which actual

⁹ Listening to a recording of an occasion like lunch strips it of its context and taken-for-grantedness. To see something in a taken-for-granted sort of way requires us to disattend to certain elements of the occasion, for example knives and forks being scraped along plates. Listening to a recording, we are not able, at least initially, to disattend to the things normally disattended to. Moreover, other relevant aspects of the context have been cut out.

talk will be occasioned by the next requirement of the meal or by the spasmodic introduction of topics unrelated to the meal. Marked behaviour is the production of talk which is neither occasioned or a locally managed conversation running in parallel with the meal.

Speier's work on this subject is doubly useful because he looks in particular at how children come to be socialised during routine occasions such as a family dinner – socialisation involving explicitly drawing attention to those moments when they are 'not doing being ordinary' properly. As I have noted in Chapter 2, the aim of the socialisation of children is that they should arrive at a situation where they can participate in an occasion in a taken-for-granted sort of a way. Not to participate in a taken-for-granted sort of way is accountable and may deny someone full membership status. Following Cicourel, Speier suggests that in some respects children are like cultural strangers who need to develop an effective sense of social structure (Speier 1969: 16). They have to decipher social meanings in a world of *as yet* unfamiliar actions and activities, a suggestion which reflects Schutz's work on 'The Stranger':

The approaching stranger ... is about to transform himself from an unconcerned onlooker into a would-be member of the approached group. The cultural pattern of the approached group, then, is no longer a subject matter of his thought but a segment of the world which has to be dominated by actions. Consequently, its position within the stranger's system of relevance changes decisively, and this means ... that another type of knowledge is required for its interpretation. Jumping from the stalls to the stage, so to speak, the former onlooker becomes a member of the cast, enters as a partner into social relations with his co-actors, and participates henceforth in action in progress.

(Schutz cited in Speier 1969: 17)

At meal times the newcomer must acquire social skills – learning when to eat, when to speak, when to remain silent, when to interrupt, how to handle food, when to leave the table and so on. But whereas an adult stranger may watch to see *how* to handle cutlery, *how* to talk and so on, children may have little sense of occasion. That something is an occasion is something that we learn culturally. In relation to these data my feeling is that some confused speakers appear at times to be similar to children in having little sense of occasion and at other times to be like adult cultural strangers in that they understand there is an occasion but the nature of it is a mystery to them.

Mr Bruner's approach

To set the context: prior to the meal Mr Bruner says 'three minutes and your dinner will be ready' indicating a taken-for-granted assumption that occasions such as dinner properly *begin*. In his talk Mr Bruner 'scripts' the

features of the occasioned activity *lunch*. The recording of this occasion involves 103 turns. Of these Mr Bruner uses 28 in occasioned activity in addition to having signposted the event several times prior to this particular stretch of conversation:

Extract 19¹⁰

- | | |
|----|---|
| 12 | There you are here's your dinner. |
| 16 | I've put plenty of gravy on and there is more if you want it. |
| 18 | There's some more if you want. |
| 20 | Yes you start. |
| 24 | Do you want a drink? |
| 26 | Mmm do you want a drink? |
| 36 | No I don't think it is ((She has said it is boiling)). |
| 40 | Start a bit there. |
| 42 | You've hardly started. |
| 44 | I didn't put you a lot on because I thought you wouldn't eat it. |
| 46 | Take your time. |
| 48 | Take your time. |
| 50 | Let me cut it up for you a bit. |
| 52 | You haven't eaten much at all come on. |
| 54 | Look it's nice look at all that. |
| 56 | Come on. |
| 64 | Try and eat a bit more meat. |
| 66 | Will you have some sweet? |
| 68 | We've got you can have prunes and custard. |
| 70 | Or apple tart would you like apple tart? |
| 72 | Come on. |
| 76 | No you haven't started try and eat a little bit. |
| 78 | Well I don't know why you shouldn't be hungry you didn't have much breakfast. |
| 84 | When you've had your dinner ((She has asked if she can lie down)). |
| 86 | You can go and have a lie down. |
| 90 | [...] Eat a bit more of your meat that will do you good. |
| 94 | It's all nice chicken. |
| 98 | OK leave it there or something I'll sort it out in a minute. |

Much of what Mr Bruner says indicates an expectation of certain appropriate behaviour for such an occasion. It is something which has 'a beginning': once handed your dinner you are supposed to get on with it (42, 56, 72, 76) and continue to get on with it; at the same time you are supposed to eat it at an acceptable speed (46, 48); and if you appear not able to do so others can intervene and offer you assistance in doing so (50), although this is probably the occasioned activity of lunch only with someone who may not be able to accomplish a normal member's performance of the occasion – we only help children and disabled people at the luncheon table.¹¹ You are supposed to eat

¹⁰ The numbers in the left hand column denote the place of the turns in the episode as a whole.

¹¹ Disabled people's political movements are frequently focused on redefining normal members and normal occasions in such a way as to alter this degrading of their situation.

an adequate meal (52) and in this household the primary object of the first course is meat (64, 90). One of the available excuses for not eating a meal in this occasioned activity is that 'it is not nice' but that excuse is not available here because 'it is nice' (54, 94). There are certain other activities which are not available to you until you have finished this one (84). These utterances contain a whole series of instructions about how to tackle the meal as an occasioned activity. But all this occasioned talk on Mr Bruner's part seems very odd in relation to another adult. It would serve very nicely as a script for lunch with a small and recalcitrant child. But normal members would be unlikely to employ quite so much talk for this sort of everyday occasioning. Of course, there is an uncertainty in the conduct of ordinary occasions as to what is allowable and therefore what is open to reasonable correction. It depends on the situation. What we have in this situation is someone who is not behaving appropriately, who has already been labelled as deviant and who is therefore open to an abnormal degree of guidance or correction.

Mrs Bruner's approach

Mrs Bruner's approach to the meal is a mixture of resistance to the occasion and behaviour inappropriate to it. There appear to be a number of different ways in which she fails to understand the event. She does not appear to understand its normal structure, thus lunch time can be seen to be no longer a taken-for-granted event but one which, for her, needs accounting:

Extract 20

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3. Mrs Bruner | [...] Is there only two of us today? |
| 4. Mr Bruner | Yes there's only us two today. |
| 5. Mrs Bruner | Why is that then? |
| 6. Mr Bruner | Well there's always only two of us. |
| 7. Mrs Bruner | Aye? |
| 8. Mr Bruner | There's only us two always. |
| 9. Mrs Bruner | Oh I don't know ma duck[...] |

Here Mrs Bruner engages in talk which is almost identical with the sorts of talk involved in Garfinkel's breaching experiments where experimenters breach everyday tacit understandings (Garfinkel: 1967). In Utterance 3, the question might have been one which a lodger or someone used to eating in an organisation or a group might have asked. At a private household's lunch only the householders are likely to be present at lunch. Certainly it is not a matter for accounting when there are only a requisite number of householders, only when there are fewer or more. This also fits into discussions about preference structures as outlined by Bilmes:

[In a discussion] If A is speaking to B on some subject, and A knows something unusual or unexpected about the subject which might be of significance to B, then A should mention it.

(*Bilmes 1988: 163*)

Bilmes gives the example of going to a party: unless told that it is a fancy dress party, people would not go in fancy dress and if they arrive in ordinary dress and find it is a fancy dress party this may be a matter of reproach between host and guests. Thus, when nothing unusual is going to happen speaker A has nothing unusual to mention and therefore is likely to be surprised if speaker B asks him a question about the occasion as though there were going to be something unusual about it: and this is the situation Mr Bruner finds himself in. Mrs Bruner has (re)marked on something that in normal commonsensical reasoning would not be remarked upon.

There are a few instances where Mrs Bruner does seem aware that there is some issue around her participation in the occasion. An example is when she says 'Have I got to start?'. This question suggests a suspicion that something has to happen first before she can begin. Her use of the words 'What's all this about?' (Appendix 4: Utterance 73) may indicate that she is mystified by the occasion. But such words may also be used in a mildly reproving way to be read by members as some kind of a request to justify what is going on: as to why an occasion is not as it should be. It is a device often used by school teachers when they walk into a noisy classroom or when they find children obviously breaking the rules. It is a request for an account and not for information. It usually takes place before someone has made sense of an event or betokens some change in a situation where again momentarily it does not make sense to someone. Here Mrs Bruner is asking for an account of that which, to an ordinary member, can be seen to be the taken-for-granted aspect of lunch as an occasion i.e. that if you do not eat your lunch it remains on your plate until something is done about it.

Mrs Bruner also does not appear to know where she is.

Extract 21

21. Mrs Bruner: Oh dear don't aye? I don't know where we are ma duck aye? I don't know aye? I don't know de da dee ded de dade.

Insofar as place can be seen as one contextualising feature of taken-for-grantedness (i.e. we always have lunch in the dining room, therefore if we are not in the dining room and are nevertheless having lunch then it is likely to be a mentionable matter) then not to know where you are indicates that you are not able to take this event (whatever it is) for granted. Another

interpretation of this utterance is that Mrs Bruner is saying that she does not know where they are in the sense of not knowing where they are in the meal, or the conversation. But generally such utterances take place after a distraction or interruption. People do not tend to lose their place in straightforward familiar occasioned activity, and if they do they account for it.

Mrs Bruner is also unable to cope with choices offered in the meal:

Extract 22

66. Mr Bruner: Will you have some sweet?
 67. Mrs Bruner: I don't know he her.
 68. Mr Bruner: We've got you can have prunes and custard.
 69. Mrs Bruner: I don't know.
 70. Mr Bruner: Or apple tart would you like apple tart?
 71. Mrs Bruner: ((Indistinctly))I don't know.

If she does not know whether she wants a sweet or not then she does not know *which* sweet she wants and so the process of the meal is held up. In order for a meal to work people need to eat in the 'right order', and to facilitate the next stage of the meal when offered a choice by choosing. It is interesting that choice at mealtimes is part of the process of socialisation of children. Beyond a certain degree, refusing to choose, or choosing things which cannot be offered or which take an inordinate amount of time to prepare, can be seen as immature behaviour according to certain common child-rearing principles. Choosing promptly within the available parameters is ordinary member behaviour. Not to do so may be an accountable matter. Even if people cannot decide promptly, they need to make it clear that they understand that a decision is required fairly urgently.

However, Mrs Bruner does, in fact, produce some occasioned talk. For example:

Extract 23

32. Mr Bruner: It's boiling.
 [...]
 57. Mrs Bruner: Oh leave it Dave don't ((Crossly)) I can't eat it if you keep messing it up oh no mmm I don't feel a bit hungry.

Here Mrs Bruner's remarks relate to the presentation of the meal. Meals should not be boiling and they should not be messed about. In relation to messing the meal about, as I have noted previously, intervention in the meal of another person is saved largely for children or disabled people; in other words for people who have acquired the labels of being less-than-full members. Their lack of full membership and the need to get the meal eaten

overrides any consideration for maintaining the face of the other as a full member (at least as far as the full member who is intervening is concerned). But here Mrs Bruner is giving herself full membership and criticising her husband for undermining it and thus threatening her face.

Extract 24

13. Mrs Bruner: Oh Lord Dave oh you've given me all that.
14. Mr Bruner: Mmm yes.
15. Mrs Bruner: Oh Dave I don't know where I'm going to put it (pause) I don't know ma duck I don't know mmm.

[...]

25. Mrs Bruner: I'm not going to eat all this lot.

[...]

45. Mrs Bruner: [...] I can't eat no more Dave he he (pause) oh dear not yet he he mm.

[...]

51. Mrs Bruner: Oh I'm full up mi duck he he.
52. Mr Bruner: You haven't eaten all that much come on.

[...]

75. Mrs Bruner: All this I ain't ate any of this.
76. Mr Bruner: No you haven't started. Try and eat a little bit.
77. Mrs Bruner: Well what's the good when I ain't hungry?

This raises the question of the identity work that the couple are doing. In these snippets, Mrs Bruner uses a specific competent identity that relates to the occasion. As Speier notes, people need to operate within the parameters of the offered occasion but there are individual ways of doing things that can still be accommodated. Specifically, in relation to mealtimes people may be known to have a small appetite, or to bolt their food, or they may have flu and not be hungry. Some of these may come to be taken-for-granted behaviours within the family, and only remarked upon when guests are present. Others may be matters for comment on an individual occasion (for example, having flu). Here Mrs Bruner says in a number of different ways that the meal is too large for her. But her account of herself and her state at this mealtime is not accepted by her husband. Mr Bruner, on the whole, refuses to validate her claims to this particular sort of membership. It seems that Mrs Bruner is not being treated as an individual person who can judge her own degree of hunger and act in such a way as to be accommodated within the parameters of the meal. Her claims to current identity as a person who is not hungry go unheard. And, again, a similar situation can often be seen to obtain with children who (in the case of my own childhood) are obliged to eat the crusts off their bread despite protesting that they do not

want them and do not like them. Instead, Mr Bruner continues with the sort of occasioning statements that might be in order with a difficult child. This suggests that there is a hierarchy of occasioning and face where the full member is prepared to affront the negative face of the non-full member in support of the occasion rather than to promote their positive face. And Mrs Bruner contests this affront.

So Mr Bruner uses mainly occasioned talk. The great wash of other talk and noise by Mrs Bruner is on the whole ignored. Only when she asks him if they are going out today does he respond (Appendix 4: Utterances 81-82.). In particular, he ignores a great deal of 'mmming', 'aaring' and moaning on Mrs Bruner's part, which I will now consider.

Self-talk episodes in a two-way conversation

I want to explore two more features of Mrs Bruner's talk that indicate that there is too much of it. I have noted earlier in regard to Tilly that the notion of 'talkative' may be related to the density of discourse. I would now also suggest that talking away from turn can contribute to the person being construed as very active in their talk (although not necessarily talkative).

Mrs Bruner groans and moans a lot in the course of her conversation. Below, in Extract 23, is a further snippet of the lunch time conversation between Mr and Mrs Bruner: the talk takes place about mid-way through the episode. It will be noted that in Utterances 56 to 58 that there is a good deal of talk from Mrs Bruner that does not seem to be occasioned by the lunch or by the previous utterance.

Extract 25

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 56. Mr Bruner: | Come on. |
| 57. Mrs Bruner: | Oh leave it Dave don't I can't eat it if you keep messing it up ((crossly)) oh no (1.9) mm I don't feel a bit hungry (.) I'd love to go back to bed he he he (.) eeny meeny miny mo oh I'd love to go back to bed (2.3) mm (.) mm (7.3) mm (don't) give me any more Dave it's awful (1.9) no I don't feel a bit hungry (2.6) I'd love to go back to bed he (2.7) I would (2.0) I feel awful (2.6) eeny meeny miny mo (2.2) Oh I do feel bad (8.0) never felt so bad in my life <i>never</i> he er murder(6.7) mmm.(3.1) mmmm (7.2) mmmmmmm (3.3) mmmmmmm (1.7) ar dear (2.5) (Dave) I do feel bad (2.5) oh it's murder mm (2.7) mmmmmmm (3.1.) never felt so bad (2.3) eeny meeny miny mo murder (2.8) mmmmmmm (2.4) mmmmmmm (1.9) mmmmmmmmm (1.5) What's that Dave? (2.7) What is that supposed to be? |
| 58. Mr Bruner: | It's a microphone. |

Both the beginning of her turn and the end of her turn (and one sentence soon after the beginning) are in the here and now. But much of the middle section of the turn is either moaning, or self-oriented talk, or rhyming talk.

Mrs Bruner does not really develop or maintain a topic that relates to the other participant, but freely expresses herself without recourse to the other person. Because of their pitch and sequential positioning we can suggest that the mms and aars cannot be back channel responses to previous remarks. Her talk appears to be almost self-talk, a mode of talk from which most ordinary members would be likely to desist when they are in company.¹² Most of the talk is quite quiet. It only increases in volume at the points when she appears to be specifically addressing Mr Bruner. We might suggest that if someone is discovered engaging in self-talk they have to justify what they were doing and are under an obligation to re-orient to the other. If they do not do so then the occasion of a conversation cannot begin. If, however, such talk takes place within what is ostensibly a conversation the situation becomes potentially problematic for the other speakers.

Mr Bruner in no way attempts to influence this episode of talk. During this turn (and indeed a number of other similar turns) he says nothing – no continuers, no contribution whatsoever. The lack of intervention of the normal speaker may well make this stretch of talk seem even odder. By saying nothing there is no attempt on Mr Bruner's part to disguise the talk by intervening or to forestall the flow in order to save her face. Having gained a turn Mrs Bruner just goes on until something in the room catches her attention. Not only does she disattend to the occasion more than a normal member, but she also presents talk not generally positively sanctioned at such an occasion. Even small children might be sanctioned if they produced such a lengthy string of odd noises. One reason, then, why people may become very active as confused speakers is that the usual restraints on speaking rights are not applied. Conversation might ostensibly be locally managed but if all the management is dominated by one person others may tacitly withdraw from participating.

The situation I have described is almost an inverse of those involving minimally active confused speakers where normal speakers, may bid for turn more than they do when participating solely with other normal speakers. In the case of the Bruners, the normal speaker effectively allows the confused speaker to be very active. This may be because for Mr Bruner to listen in order to work out what his wife is saying so as to decide whether to bid for

¹² Muttering and self talk in the presence of others is often used to some purpose, to indicate that the self talker is absorbed in private activity, and sometimes to convey the 'inner person' to others. However, this does not seem to be the case with Mrs Bruner.

turn himself is a rather pointless activity – it is not a motivating force in this conversation (Sacks et al.: 1978). Indeed, elsewhere in the Bruner recordings, where Mr Bruner does bid for turn it turns out to be a largely fruitless activity: for example, I noted earlier, summoning sequences where Mrs Bruner summons him from a separate part of the house and ignores several responses to her summons, waiting instead until he is actually co-present. Here, Mr Bruner's management of his side of the conversation is organised purely in relation to the management of the meal.

In some respects, then, the occasion of lunch is one which Mrs Bruner fails to do properly. Much of her talk is inappropriate to an ordinary household lunch attended by adults who know each other well. She orients to the occasion as though she is perplexed by it. At the same time there is a dissonance between her claims to full membership and her failure to behave appropriately. The non-occasioned talk in which she does engage is self-oriented, and would usually be deemed inappropriate at a social occasion. She is not voluble in the same way as Tilly, but if someone talks in such a way as to problematise taken-for-granted understandings this too is likely to be construed as too much talk.

Conclusion

In this chapter I began with an ordinary member's categorisation of Tilly and Mrs Bruner as very active confused speakers. I have tried to explain this supposition by showing that their talk disregards certain constraining influences that limit the talk of normal speakers.

In relation to Tilly I suggested that very active confused speakers may use dispreferred answers in combination with repetition, thereby producing talk that can be typified as 'talkative'. I also examined situations where Tilly's failure to adhere to Grice's maxim of quality generates talk in which the 'truth' is contested. With regard to Mrs Bruner I suggested that many of the ordinary occasions of everyday life are mysteries to her. These include management of household routines and even management of her own body in the form of such activities as eating, and getting into bed. The problems generated by this inability to do or understand ordinary activity produce a good deal of talk both in terms of summonses to her husband (to find out what to do) and in often inappropriate occasioned talk when she is co-present with her husband.

In relation to both women I proposed that very active confused speakers frequently have available to them topics for talk which may not generally be available to ordinary members. That is to say, for such confused speakers taken-for-granted assumptions which rarely surface (unless they become marked in some way) *are* treated as available, and thus violate the maxim of quantity (Grice: 1975).

In the course of the discussion I have also shown that normal speakers use various strategies for dealing with very active confused speakers. In the face of the type of 'talkative' behaviour Tilly produces, Moyra produces more talk too (certainly more than we might expect from an interviewer) and this is talk which in many ways emulates the constructions of confused speakers: it is repetitive, dispreferred and so on. On the other hand, Mr Bruner at times may refuse to become interactionally available when his wife summons him: and when he is with her often seems to restrict himself to occasioned talk. He ignores the majority of his wife's unoccasioned talk, since it is in no way a motivating factor for him to want to claim a turn. This illustrates another strategy on the part of normal speakers: they may select just one thread of the talk to engage with and ignore the rest.

The lack of rapport that these confused speakers have with normal speakers would seem to relate in some ways to the concept of face. Mrs Bruner appears to have difficulty in maintaining a line because she has a poor sense of occasion, environment and even body, despite substantial instruction from her husband. Tilly, on the other hand, maintains a line against all the evidence. Both positions suggest that face-work is likely to be problematic for other speakers interacting with them.

We may therefore suggest that, as with moderately active confused speakers, there are some aspects of normal interactional appearances to be found in the talk of these very active confused speakers. But this structural normality is not enough to make the talk normal.

Chapter 7

Summary and conclusion

In this study I have examined verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers. In particular, I have been concerned with how talk is recognised as confused and how it is dealt with. The methodic practices that lead to the constitution of confusion have been treated as a topic for investigation.

I began by arguing that much of the professional and investigative literature in this area sees confusion as a pathology. It is concerned with identifying the features of confused talk in the abstract, unconnected with any consideration of normal talk. The nature of the latter is simply taken for granted. Yet a considerable literature is available that shows that normal talk is a complex, context-sensitive and achieved matter. The work of sociologists such as Goffman and Garfinkel, of conversation analysts, and of philosophers and linguists like Grice, Sperber and Wilson is of particular significance here. One point that emerges clearly from this work is that the difference between normal and confused talk is defined in the course of the social interaction. There can be confusion in normal conversation and intelligible passages in 'confused' conversation: what is crucial is participants' recognition of confusion and how they deal with it.

Given the context-sensitive character of talk, it was important for my study that I examined the contexts in which my data were produced. Thus, I outlined how I began the study and came to get a point of view on my data. This process involved an interplay between uncovering ordinary members' assumptions about confusion, and the gradual fitting of the data into an appropriate academic framework. I examined how the interviews that I conducted in a psycho-geriatric clinic were constructed collaboratively with considerable intervention and negotiation involved in determining the kind of occasions they turned out to be.

The examination of my own interviews touched off a concern with looking at criteria by which I might consider my other data. In relation to the interviews conducted by Tom and Moyra and the tapes made by Mr Bruner, one of the main issues was how I *heard* the data. The process of inference I went through to 'make something' of these data is, in a sense, an important aspect of the 'fieldwork' of this project. Coming to find something in the data also related to my examination of types of talk that occurred there –

conversations, interviews and what I called para-chat. Even within ordinary conversation members have some notion of more specialised talk whose status can be negotiated. A number of different types of interviews – ethnographic, medical, survey and media – all provided repertoires of interview-type behaviour available for participants to draw on.

In order to explore in more detail the issue of the negotiation of an occasion, I considered the openings of the interviews which I had conducted. Here, again, context is a feature which shapes people's orientations to talk. Openings begin to determine membership categories and these affect what people 'need to say' and how they use the machinery of description. Several stages at the outset of an interview provided participants with inferential resources to try to develop a method of interaction: the setting up of the tape recorder, the reason given for the meeting, the opening question. Each stage can be seen to offer information, some of which may contradict what was offered at the previous stage. Thus development of 'the way to go about this interaction' proceeded on a step-by-step basis.

Having considered the contexts, I began my detailed analysis of the confused speakers represented in my data. I divided them into three broadly defined categories: minimally active, moderately active, and very active. The initial categorisation was done purely on a member's understanding of people who talk too much or too little for various conversational situations, using common-sense criteria such as 'She hardly spoke a word' and 'She just went on and on'.

I focused to begin with on interviews with minimally active confused speakers. Here, the interviewer and carers spoke more than the confused speakers, often between them producing a superficially 'successful interview', but one in which the confused speaker's contribution was sparse. Many of these speakers seemed to have difficulties in providing information about themselves, often calling upon carers to help out or being assisted by carers taking action on their own initiative. This situation has substantial consequences for both identity and biography, specifically – that no matter how full a biography is presented or how ordinary an identity is fashioned – if it has to be done by someone else then this is face-threatening for the confused speaker.

I went on to look at the talk of moderately active confused speakers, interviews with whom often appeared to be less successful than those with minimally active confused speakers, since by participating more they

exposed themselves to interactional danger. Here, repair work is a key to understanding the problems that the moderately active confused speakers had. They ran into problems with presenting mundane biographical details and then proceeded to produce problematic repairs. Such work was inadequate in two senses. It did not effectively correct or repair the problem and, in terms of face-work, the repairs drew attention to incapacity rather than away from it.

Finally, I examined the talk of very active confused speakers, people who seem to exploit opportunities for talk that are unavailable to normal speakers. Unmonitored, unwarranted repetition frequently expanded the sheer volume of talk. In addition, faulty or inadequate knowledge of biography or routine that was not amenable to correction was debated to a considerable extent with normal speakers, again creating a lot of talk.

Although this thesis has been about verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers, for the most part, the extracts that I analyse do not exemplify the baroque confusion of, for example, Beckett's plays (which, arguably, are not confused anyway because none of the talk appear to be problematic for the participants, only for the audience). In some respects the talk I have analysed is only slightly odd. Most of the momentary confusions exemplified are of a kind that can be heard frequently in ordinary conversation; most do not undermine the conversation and bring it to a halt. Normal and confused speakers retrench, regroup and 'get over' the problems somehow. Nevertheless, some participants are routinely to be seen as 'normal' and others as 'confused'. This is a members' accomplishment but it is not one in which there would be much disagreement about who is and is not confused. So how does it come to be that even while relatively normal conversational appearances are being maintained some people can be categorised as confused and others are seen as normal?

The work of people such as Speier illustrates the interactional consequences of the participation of less-than-full members, many of which are marked and accountable. In some senses, the participation of less-than-full members may be seen as a signpost for interactional troubles. In the case of the confused speakers in this study, with the exception of the Bruner tapes recorded at their home, all the speakers were being interviewed because they were confused. Their less-than-full membership was, in fact, the point of the meetings that constitute these data. Such labelling may suggest to ordinary members, from the outset, that interactional situations of a particular kind

may occur. Indeed, they may be ready to attribute any oddities in the conversation to the less-than-full membership of some of the participants. Regardless of what sort of repair work or rectification the confused speaker undertakes, their efforts may be degraded by the fact that they have already been given the identity of 'confused person'. In a sense any 'deviant' talk that ensues can be seen to confirm the label they arrived with. Moreover, even though some of the talk produced by confused speakers may have normal features, this may not be given credence. In a sense, this is rather like the situation that criminals may find themselves in: although they do not spend all their time 'being criminals' their whole identity may come to be determined by that label (Matza: 1969).

Secondly, the behaviour of the confused speakers challenges common understandings of what goes on in talk. In a conversation or interview ordinary members have a repertoire of strategies upon which they can draw, and they also have personal resources which 'anyone' has that they can use, such as their own biography and experience. How they select from this repertoire is determined by their reading of the current situation. People decide what to do by judging what is appropriate at any particular point in time. In an ambiguous situation, especially, they take it step-by-step, attending to contexts and recognising that they themselves shape those contexts with each utterance they make. Generally speaking, such ongoing local management of the talk is a taken-for-granted activity. Even if many aspects of the talk are pre-allocated, as for example in an interview, participants are still able to choose *how* to respond, although they need to select an appropriate formulation from the many available. When confused speakers participate in conversations, however, these ordinary conversational undertakings are called into question. The situation is analogous to Garfinkel's breaching experiments (1967). Such challenges to the taken-for-granted cause interactional troubles, creating problems for everyone in the form of how to talk and what to say.

In order to save face participants need to rectify how they talk or what they say so as to recover themselves. If they fail to do this then their identity suffers. I would suggest that all the confused speakers discussed in this study have difficulties with this. And this is for several reasons. They are frequently unable to bring to an interaction those resources that it is normally assumed everyone has: resources that help people avoid trouble in the first place. Often there are gaps in the biographies they present. Or these biographies do not stand up to scrutiny from other participants. In some cases they appear to

be unable to produce a biography at all. If they *can* articulate their biography they are either unable to present a correct formulation or to choose an appropriate one, a situation where some repair work is called for.

However, typically, they do not repair trouble, or their repair work is inadequate. And this in itself draws more attention to the original trouble. The markedness of the problem is yet more highlighted. Moreover, they continue to be out of face even when they resort to strategies which ordinary members would use to save face. More than this, though, very often that which they are seeking to repair is of a kind that should not normally cause any trouble. The philosopher Wittgenstein has pointed out that there are certain kinds of information that are givens in our everyday life, indeed, that form the 'hinges' upon which it works (Wittgenstein: 1969). He uses the example of knowing one's own name but this can be extended to other basic biographical facts, such as how many children one has had, what relation one's daughter's daughter is to oneself, and so on. Such knowledge is constitutive of normal membership. In many ways getting it wrong is beyond all repair.

A final source of problems is that when ordinary members are talking to someone with an overarching identity of confusion they can take licence to do some unusual things in conversation – engage in test questions, interrupt, present bizarre formulations and so on. The result of this is that confused speakers may be presented much more frequently than others with conversational situations involving peculiarities that would be difficult for anyone to handle.

In this way, confused speakers are faced with a sort of downward spiral. Inadequate resources of personal knowledge tend to cause trouble some of which is difficult if not impossible to rectify. Inadequacy of repair techniques means that they worsen the situation they are trying to deal with. On top of this, a prior degraded identity means that whatever they do is open to interpretation as a reflection of their 'confused' identity, and in many cases they are themselves aware of this. All this adds up to chronic interactional trouble for confused speakers. But the problems I have listed confused speakers as having are not merely technical. Each constitutes a threat to face. Through the act of talk the sense of self as a valued person, and indeed the sense of being a person at all, is constantly precarious. They know, as Mr Graham puts it, that all the time they are in danger of 'blowing the gaffe'.

At the same time, normal speakers in interaction with confused speakers are themselves confronted with interactional troubles, and these create threats to their face as well. There seem to be several ways in which they handle this. Embedded correction, as depicted by Jefferson (1987), is one strategy, one where the adjustment of incorrect facts does not become the explicit interactional business of the conversation: this promises to maintain face for all concerned. Explicit correction is another option. When correction becomes interactional work it challenges face but at the same time treats confused speakers in the same way as normal speakers and therefore orients to full membership. There is also formulation and reformulation of talk to accommodate confused speakers as if they were normal interactants. This too orients to full membership, or perhaps more properly we could say that it mimics orientation to full membership. Finally, there is answering for confused speakers, ignoring them, or challenging their accounts. These strategies seem to orient to the confused speaker as a less-than-full member.

All of the confused talk I have studied *works* in some ways: it has many structurally normal features. The presence of a confused speaker does not mean the absence of a coherent conversation. However, in most of the situations I have discussed it would appear that no interactional work done by normal speakers (or, indeed, by confused speakers) can result in confused speakers passing as normal members. If a normal speaker has to do all the work to construct full membership for another, then that other cannot be seen as a fully participating normal member, even though the conversation may well appear 'normal'. If a normal speaker has to engage in correction that draws attention to difficulties no normal member would have, then even though this is a normal conversational device it undermines the membership of the confused speaker. And, finally, to ignore deviant talk or otherwise to marginalise it undermines membership of confused speakers, even though it may result in normal interactional appearances for the conversation as a whole.

In these ways, ordinary conversations, interviews and other forms of interactions can accommodate confused speakers and can often maintain an appearance of normality; but this cannot be done without the use of devices on the part of normal speakers that impair the identity of those they are seeking to assist.

References

- Allison, R. S. (1962) *The Senile Brain*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Alzheimer's Disease Society (1989) (Second edn) *Caring for the Person with Dementia. A Guide for Families and Other Carers*. London: Alzheimer's Disease Society.
- Alzheimer's Disease Society (1990) (Second edn) *Questions and Answers*. London: Alzheimer's Disease Society.
- Anderson, R. J. and Sharrock, W. W. (1984) Analytic Work: Aspects of the Organisation of Conversational Data. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 14 (1): 103-124.
- Atkinson, J. M. and Drew P. (1979) *Order in Court. The Organisation of Verbal Interaction in Judicial Settings*. London: Macmillan.
- Atkinson, M. A. (1973) 'Formulating Lifetimes: The Normatively Ordered Properties of Some Life-Cycle Properties.' Unpublished MA (Econ) thesis, University of Manchester.
- Atkinson, M. A., Cuff, E. C. and Lee, J. R. E. (1978) The Recommencement of a Meeting as a Member's Accomplishment. In J. Schenkein (ed.) *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*. New York: Academic Press.
- Atkinson, P. (1990) *The Ethnographic Imagination*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Atkinson, P. (1992) *Understanding Ethnographic Texts*. Newbury Park, London: Sage.
- Bauerle, R. (1979) Questions and Answers. In R. Bauerle, U. Egli and A. Von Stechow (eds) *Semantics from Different Points of View*. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Belotti, E. G. (1975) *Little Girls: Social Conditioning and its Effect on the Stereotyped Roles of Women During Infancy*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.
- Benson, D. and Hughes, J. A. (1983) *The Perspective of Ethnomethodology*. London and New York: Longman.
- Bilmes, J. (1988) The Concept of Preference in Conversation Analysis. *Language in Society* 17: 161-181.

- Blessed, G., Tomlinson, B. E. and Roth, M. (1968) The Association Between Quantitative Measures of Dementia and of Senile Change in the Cerebral Grey Matter of Elderly subjects. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 114: 797-811.
- Briggs, C. L. (1986) *Learning How to Ask. A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1978) Universals in Language Use: Politeness Phenomena. In E. Goody (ed.) *Questions and Politeness. Strategies in Social Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burgess, R. C. (1988) Conversations With a Purpose: The Ethnographic Interview in Educational Research. *Studies in Qualitative Methodology* 1: 137-155.
- Burns, T. (1992) *Erving Goffman*. London: Routledge.
- Chaika, E. and Alexander, P. (1986) The Ice Cream Stories: A Study in Normal and Psychotic Narrations. *Discourse Processes* 9: 305-328.
- Cheepen, C. (1988) *The Predictability of Informal Conversation*. London and New York: Pinter Publishers.
- Cicourel, A. V. (1987) The Interpenetration Of Communicative Contexts: Examples From Medical Encounters. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50 (2): 217-226.
- Clayman, S. E. (1988) Displaying Neutrality in Television News. *Social Problems* 35 (4): 474-492.
- Code, C. and Lodge, B. (1987) Language in Dementia of Recent Referral. *Age and Ageing* 16: 366-372.
- Coenen, H. (1991) Wandering Through the Caves: Phenomenonological Research in a Social World of Dementia. In D.R. Maines (ed.) *Social Organization and Social Process. Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Converse, J. M. and Presser, S. (1986) *Survey Questions. Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Cook, J. B. (1984) Reminiscing: How it Can Help Confused Nursing Home Residents. *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work* February: 90-93.

- Coulter, J. (1973) *Approaches to Insanity. A Philosophical and Sociological Study*. London: Martin Robertson.
- _____ (1975) Perceptual Accounts and Interpretive Asymmetries. *Sociology* 9: 385-396.
- Coupland, N., Giles, H. and Wiemann, J. M. (eds) (1991) *Miscommunication and Problematic Talk*. Newbury Park. London: Sage.
- Dexter, L. (1970) *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.
- Dingwall, R. (1980) Orchestrated Encounters: An Essay in the Comparative Analysis of Speech-Exchange Systems. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 2 (2) 151-173.
- Drew, P. and Heritage, J. (eds) (1992) *Talk at Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Drew, P. and Wootton, A. (eds) (1988) *Erving Goffman. Exploring the Interaction Order*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Earnest, M. P., Heaton, R. K., Wilkinson, W. E. and Manke, W. F. (1979) Cortical Atrophy, Ventricular Enlargement and Intellectual Impairment in the Aged. *Neurology* 29: 1138-43.
- Edgerton, R. B. (1967) *The Cloak of Competence. Stigma in the Lives of the Mentally Retarded*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California.
- Feil, N. (1982) *Validation. The Feil Method. How to Help Disoriented Old-Old*. Cleveland Ohio: Edward Feil Productions.
- Fisher, S. and Groce, S. B. (1990) Accounting Practices in Medical Interviews. *Language in Society* 19 (2): 225-250.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Giglioli, P. P. (ed.) (1972) *Language and Social Context. Selected Readings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. (1959) *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- _____ (1961) *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- _____ (1963a) *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- _____ (1963b) *Behavior in Public Places. Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press.
- _____ (1969) On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction. In *Where the Action Is*. London: Allen Lane Press.
- _____ (1971) Remedial Interchanges. In *Relations in Public. Microstudies of Public Order*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.
- _____ (1972) Embarrassment and Social Organization. In *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- _____ (1975) *Frame Analysis*. Harmondsworth: Peregrine/Penguin.
- _____ (1981) *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- _____ (1983a) The Interaction Order. *American Sociological Review* 48: 1-17.
- _____ (1983b) Felicity's Condition. *American Journal of Sociology* 89: 1-53.
- Goodwin, C. (1987) Forgetfulness as an Interactive Resource. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50 (2): 115-131.
- Goody, E. (1978) *Questions and Politeness. Strategies in Social Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1975) Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds) *Syntax and Semantics. Volume 3. Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Gubrium, J. F. (1985) Alzheimer's Disease as Biographical Work. In W.A. Peterson and J. Quadagno (eds) *Social Bonds in Later Life*. Beverley Hills, California: Sage Publications.
- _____ (1986) *Oldtimers and Alzheimer's: The Descriptive Organization of Senility*. Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press Inc.
- _____ (1987) Structuring and Deconstructing the Course of Illness: The Alzheimer's Disease Experience. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 9 (1): 1-12.
- Gubrium, J. F. and Holstein, J. A. (1994) Analysing Talk and Interaction. In J. F. Gubrium, and A. Sankar (eds) *Qualitative Methods in Aging Research*. Thousand Oaks California, London: Sage Publications Inc.
- Gumperz, J. J. and Hymes, D. (eds) (1972) *Directions in Sociolinguistics. The Ethnography of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

- Hammersley, M. (ed.) (1986a) *Controversies in Classroom Research*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- _____ (ed.) (1986b) *Case Studies in Classroom Research*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Hawkins, R.A. and Phelps, M.E. (1986) Position Emission Tomography for Evaluation of Cerebral Function. *Current Concepts in Diagnostic Nuclear Medicine* 3: 1-13.
- Heath, C. (1988) Embarrassment and Interactional Organization. In P. Drew and A. Wootton (eds) *Erving Goffman. Exploring the Interaction Order*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. (1984) *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Holstein, J. A. (1988) Court Ordered Incompetence: Conversational Organization in Involuntary Commitment Proceedings. *Social Problems* 35 (4): 458-473.
- Hughes, D. and May, D. (1986) Order, Rules and Social Control in Two Training Centres For Mentally Retarded Adults. *Sociological Review* 34 (1): 158-184.
- Hughes, E. C. (1977) *The Sociological Eye*. Chicago: Aldine Press.
- Jefferson, G. (1978) Sequential Aspects of Story Telling in Conversation. In J. Schenkein (ed.) *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*. New York: Academic Press.
- _____ (1987) On Exposed and Embedded Correction in Conversation. In G. Button, and J. R. E. Lee (eds) *Talk and Social Organisation*. Clevedon Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Jefferys, M. (1988) An Ageing Britain – What is Its Future? In B. Gearing, M. Johnson and T. Heller (eds) *Mental Health Problems in Old Age*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Jones, G. (1992) A Communication Model for Dementia. In G.M. Jones, and B. M. L. Mieson (eds) *Caregiving in Dementia: Research and Implications*. London: Tavistock.

- Kemper, S., Lyons, K. and Anagnopoulos, C. (1995) Joint Storytelling by Patients with Alzheimer's Disease and Their Spouses. *Discourse Processes* 20 (2) 205-217.
- Kitwood, T. (1987) Explaining Senile Dementia. The Limits of Neuropathological Research. *Free Associations* 10: 117-140.
- Kitwood, T. (1988) The Technical, the Personal, and the Framing of Dementia. *Social Behaviour* 3: 161-179.
- Kitwood, T. (1993) Towards a Theory of Dementia Care: Personhood and Well-being. *Ageing and Society* 12: 269-287.
- Leech, G.N. (1983) *Principles and Pragmatics*. London and New York: Longman.
- Levinson, S.C. (1983) *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Livingston, E. (1987) *Making Sense of Ethnomethodology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Lynch, M. (1983) Accommodation Practices: Vernacular Treatments of Madness. *Social Problems* 31 (2): 153-164.
- Lynch, M. and Bogen, D. (1994) Harvey Sacks's Primitive Natural Science. *Theory, Culture and Society* 11: 65-104.
- Mackay, R. W. (1974) Conceptions of Children and Models of Socialization. In R. Turner (ed.) *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- McCracken, G. (1988) *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park, London: Sage.
- McHoul, A. (1978) The Organization of Turns at Formal Talk in the Classroom. *Language in Society* 7: 183-213.
- _____ (1990) The Organization of Repair in Classroom Talk. *Language in Society* 19: 349-377.
- Matza, D. (1969) *Becoming Deviant*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Meacher, M. (1972) *Taken For a Ride. Special Residential Homes for Confused Old People : A study of Separatism in Social Policy*. Harlow: Longman.
- Mead, M. (1943) *Coming of Age in Samoa. A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- _____ (1955) *Children and Ritual in Bali*. In M. Mead and M. Wolfenstein (eds) *Childhood in Contemporary Societies*. Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press.
- _____ (1963) *Growing Up in New Guinea. A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Mehan, H. (1986) 'What Time is it, Denise?': Asking Known Information Questions in Classroom Discourse. In M. Hammersley (ed.) *Case Studies in Classroom Research*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Mishler, E. G. (1984) *The Discourse of Medicine: Dialectics of Medical Interviews*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- _____ (1986) *Research Interviewing. Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Moser, C. A. and Kalton, G. (1971) (Second edn) *Survey Methods in Social Investigation*. London: Heinemann.
- Mura Swan, S. (1983) Licensing Violations: Legitimate Violations of Grice's Conversational Principle. In R. T. Craig and K. Tracey (eds) *Conversational Coherence. Form, Structure and Strategy*. Beverley Hills, London: Sage.
- Nofsinger, R. E. (1991) *Everyday Conversation*. Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications.
- O'Keefe, D. (1979) Ethnomethodology. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 9 (2): 187-219.
- Ochs, E. (1979) Transcription as Theory. In E. Ochs, and B.B. Schieffelin (eds) *Developmental Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press.
- Open University (1988) P577, *Mental Health Problems in Old Age*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Open University (1990) P654, *Working With Older People*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Payne, G. C. F. (1976) Making a Lesson Happen: An Ethnomethodological Analysis. In M. Hammersley and P. Woods (eds) *The Process of Schooling*. London: Routledge.
- Payne, G. C. F. and Cuff, E. C. (eds) (1982) *Doing Teaching. The Practical Management of Classrooms*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd.
- Pearce, R. D. (1973) 'The Structure of Discourse in Broadcast Interviews.' Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham.

- Pollitt, P. A., O'Connor, D. W. and Anderson, I. (1989) Mild Dementia: Perceptions and Problems. *Ageing and Society* 9: 261-275.
- Pollner, M. (1975) The Very Coinage of Your Brain: The Anatomy of Reality Disjunctures. *Philosophy of Social Science* 5: 411-430.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984) Agreeing and Disagreeing with Assessments: Some Features of Preferred/ Dispreferred Turn Shapes. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds) *Structures of Social Action. Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology. Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. Newbury Park, London: Sage.
- Propp, V. I. (1968) *The Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Psathas, G. and Anderson, T (1990) The 'Practices' of Transcription in Conversation Analysis. *Semiotica* 78 (1/2): 75-99.
- Rawlings, B. (1988) Local knowledge: The Analysis of Transcribed Audio Materials for Organizational Ethnography. *Studies in Qualitative Methodology* 1: 157-177.
- Rayfield, J. R. (1972) What is a Story? *American Anthropologist*, 74: 1085-1106.
- Richardson, L. (1990) *Writing Strategies. Reaching Diverse Audiences*. Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications.
- Rochester, S. and Martin, J. R. (1979) *Crazy Talk. A study of the Discourse of Schizophrenic Talkers*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Sacks, H. (1963) Sociological Description. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 8: 1-16.
- _____ (1972) On the Analyzability of Stories by Children. In J.J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds) *Directions in Sociolinguistics. The Ethnography of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- _____ (1984) On Doing "Being Ordinary". In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds) *Structures of Social Action. Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- _____ (1995a) *Lectures on Conversation. Volume 1*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- _____ (1995b) *Lectures on Conversation. Volume 2*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A. and Jefferson, G. (1978) A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn Taking for Conversation. In J. Schenkein (ed.)

Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction. New York: Academic Press.

Schegloff, E. A. (1972a) Sequencing in Conversational Openings. In J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds) *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.

_____ (1972b) Notes on Conversational Practice: Formulating Place. In D. Sudnow (ed.) (1972) *Studies in Social Interaction*. New York: The Free Press.

_____ (1980) Preliminaries to Preliminaries: "Can I ask you a question?" *Sociological Inquiry* 50 (3/4): 104-152.

_____ (1988) Goffman and the Analysis of Conversation. In P. Drew and A. Wootton (eds) *Erving Goffman. Exploring the Interaction Order*. Oxford: Polity Press.

_____ (1989) Harvey Sacks – Lectures 1964-1965. An Introduction/ Memoir. *Human Studies* 12: 185-209.

_____ (1992) On Talk and Its Institutional Occasions. In P. Drew, and J. Heritage, (eds) *Talk at Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schegloff, E. A. and Sacks, H. (1974) Opening Up Closings. In R. Turner (ed.) *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Schenkein, J. (ed.) (1978) *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*. New York: Academic Press.

Schenkein, J. and Ryave, A. L. (1974) Notes on the Art of Walking. In R. Turner (ed.) *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Sharrock, W. W. (1974) On Owning Knowledge. In R. Turner (ed.) *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

_____ (1977) (Second edn) The Problem of Order. In P. Worsley (ed.) *Introducing Sociology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Sharrock, W. and Anderson, B. (1986) *The Ethnomethodologists*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood Ltd., London: Tavistock Publications.

_____ (1987) Work Flow in a Paediatric Clinic. In G. Button and J.R.E. Lee (eds) *Talk and Social Organisation*. Clevedon, Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Sidell, M. (1986) 'Coping With Confusion: The Experience of Sixty Elderly People and Their Carers.' Unpublished PhD thesis, University of East Anglia.

- Silverman, D. (1973) Interview Talk: Bringing Off a Research Instrument. *Sociology* 7 (1): 31-48.
- _____ (1987) *Communication and Medical Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- _____ (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage Publications.
- _____ (1994) Describing Sexual Activities in HIV Counselling: The Co-operative Management of the Moral Order. *Text* 14 (3): 427-453.
- Speier, M. (Authorized facsimile) (1969) 'The Organization of Talk and Socialization Practices in Family Household Interaction.' Unpublished PhD thesis, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A.
- _____ (1972) Some Conversational Problems for Interactional Analysis. In D. Sudnow (ed.) *Studies in Social Interaction*. New York: The Free Press.
- _____ (1973) *How to Observe Face-to-Face Communication: a Sociological Introduction*. Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing Company Inc.
- Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. (1986) *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Stimson, G. and Webb, B. (1975) *Going to See the Doctor*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Strong, P. M. (1979) *The Ceremonial Order of the Clinic. Parents, Doctors and Medical Bureacracies*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Suchman, L. and Jordan, B. (1990) Interactional Troubles in Face-to-Face Survey Interviews. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85: 232-244.
- Tannen, D. (1989) *Talking voices. Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taraborrelli, P. (1994) Innocents, Converts and Oldhands: The Experiences of Alzheimer's Disease Caregivers. In M. Bloor and P. Taraborrelli (eds) *Qualitative Studies in Health and Medicine*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Taylor, T. J. and Cameron, D. (1987) *Analysing Conversation. Rules and Units in the Structure of Talk*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Teasdale, K. (1983) Reality Orientation. 1. A Programme for the Elderly. *Nursing Times* November 9: 49-52.
- Tolson, A. (1991) Televised Chat and the Synthetic Personality. In P. Scannell (ed.) *Broadcast Talk*. London, Newbury Park: Sage.

- Turner, R. (1972) Some Formal Properties of Therapy Talk. In D. Sudnow (ed.) *Studies in Social Interaction*. New York: The Free Press.
- Watson, D.R. (1992) Ethnomethodology, Conversation Analysis and Education. *The UNESCO International Review of Education*. Summer.
- Webb, L. and Morris, N. (1994) Wilson's Model of Family Care Giving. *Nursing Standard* 8: (16) 27-30.
- Williams, R. (1988) Understanding Goffman's Methods. In P. Drew and A. Wootton (eds) *Erving Goffman. Exploring the Interaction Order*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1969) *On Certainty*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Yearley, S. and Brewer, J.D. (1989) Stigma and Conversational Competence: A Conversation Analytic Study of the Mentally Handicapped. *Human Studies* 12: 97-115.
- Zimmerman, D.H. and Pollner, M. (1974) The Everyday World as a Phenomenon. In J.D. Douglas (ed.) *Understanding Everyday Life*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Appendix 1: Research participants

Names of confused speakers and carers altered for reasons of confidentiality.

1. Interviews at the psycho-geriatric clinic.

Data collected July-August 1990.

Mrs Bowles (client), Mr Bowles (carer/son).

Edith (client), Barry (carer/son).

Mrs Hoy (client), Mr Hoy (carer/husband).

Mrs Inman (client), Mrs Grace (carer/daughter).

Mrs Pugh (client), Mr Pugh (carer/husband), Mrs James (carer/daughter).

Mr Toll (client), Mrs Toll (carer/wife).

Mrs Whittaker (client), Mrs Becker (carer/daughter).

Pam Shakespeare (interviewer; Lecturer, Open University).

2. Moyra's Interview

Data collected early 1980s

Tilly (an older woman, suffering from confusion).

Moyra Sidell (interviewer; Research Fellow, Open University).

3. Tom's Interview

Data collected mid 1980s

Mr Graham (an older man suffering from confusion).

Mrs Graham (carer/wife).

Tom Heller (interviewer; Senior Lecturer, Open University).

4. Bruner's household talk

Data collected summer 1990

Mrs Bruner (an older woman, suffering from confusion)

Mr Bruner (carer/husband).

Appendix 2: Transcription conventions

For many of the extracts in this thesis I have used a selection of transcription conventions from those developed by Jefferson (see Schenkein: 1978, for a fuller explanation of conventions). Additionally I have used one device suggested by Potter and Wetherell (1987: see point 9 of this appendix).

1. Simultaneous utterances

Pam: I used to work there
 Carer: [[We've always lived there

2. Overlapping utterances

The beginning of an overlap is annotated thus:

Pam: I used to work there
 Carer: [We've always lived there

And where the overlapping stops:

Carer: We've always lived there
 Pam: [I see]

3. Contiguous utterances

This is when there is no gap between utterances:

Pam: I used to work there=
 Carer: =We've always lived there

4. Contiguous utterances and overlap

Equals sign are used to denote where one speaker's talk continues despite an interruption by someone else:

Pam: I used to work there=
 Carer: [We've always lived there
 Pam: =When I first started teaching

5. Speech characteristics

Here a colon is used to denote extended sound within words (the greater the number of colons the longer the extension):

Pam: Can you see the wheel going round?=
 Mrs Hoy: Ye:s.

6. Intervals within and between utterances

1. Intervals within utterances are timed in tenths of seconds and denoted in the following way:

Carer: She was oh (0.9) must have been 59 when it first seemed to crop up.

2. Intervals between utterances, also timed in tenths of seconds:

Pam: And what were their names?
(1.3)

Carer: She can't remember.
(0.7)

Pam: Can't remember.

3. Untimed pauses within and between utterances:

Pam: I wonder (.) whether you remember
(.)

Respondent: I'm not sure.

7. Emphasis

Emphasis is denoted by italics, the more pronounced the italics the more the emphasis:

Tilly: *It's my own home* why shouldn't *I be there* **IT'S NOT RIGHT IT'S MY HOME**

8.

1. Double brackets are used for vocalisations not easy to render in text, or for details of the conversational setting or characterisations of the talk:

Pam: Do you ((Clears throat)) like it at the day centre?
((Anteroom door opens))

Mrs Hoy: ((Whispered)) Yes.

2. They can also be used where the transcriber is in some doubt as to what was said:

Edith: (What do I think?)

And where no meaning could be imposed

Edith: ()

9. Omission of some aspects of transcript

Potter and Wetherell suggest using square bracket for omission of aspects of talk and for clarification of aspects of talk:

Pam: And when did you live there?

Carer: [Talks about being a miner in the 1940s]

10. Non-conversation analysis extracts

Where I have been more interested in what people say rather than how they say it, I have simplified the transcription in such a way as to leave out many of the conventions relating to turn taking, speech characteristics and so on, while maintaining the basic column structure used elsewhere:

Pam:	Where did you go in Devon?
Mr Toll:	Where was it?
Mrs Toll:	Dawlish.
Mr Toll:	Dawlish.
Pam:	Had you been there before?
Mrs Toll:	Years and years ago.

The fuller transcription is as follows:

1. Pam:	Wh wh er where did you go in Devon? (1.8)
2. Mr Toll:	((Low)) Where was it? =
3. Mrs Toll:	=Dawlish=
4. Mr Toll:	=Dawlish=
5. Pam:	Ha had you been there before?
6. Mrs Toll:	((Low)) Years and years ago.

Appendix 3: Tilly's story

1. Moyra: [...] How have you been keeping? How are you feeling?
2. Tilly: Not too good I have rheumatism a lot.
3. Moyra: Oh.
4. Tilly: As long as I can keep on that's the chief thing I've got some very good stuff.
5. Moyra: Have you?
6. Tilly: Mentholatum Deep Heat I'll show it to you and that's lovely ((Noises)) I've had it her I must get home because my sister's there and I want to know if she's going to be there of what *I MUST GET HOME TONIGHT.*
7. Moyra: Alright.
8. Tilly: And
9. Moyra: Where's your Deep Heat?
10. Tilly: Aye?
11. Moyra: Where is your bottle of Deep Heat you were going to show it to me.
12. Tilly: You what?
13. Moyra: Your bottle of Deep Heat.
14. Tilly: Aye?
15. Moyra: Your Deep Heat you were going to show it to me.
16. Tilly: Oh yes.
(Long silence)
17. Tilly: This piece of carpet's mine you know.
18. Moyra: I know oh that's it is it?
19. Tilly: That's lovely stuff if you've got rheumatism or anything like that
20. Moyra: Is it?
21. Tilly: Yes and the heat that it give out and it's clean now I went to the doctor's before I got that.
22. Moyra: Yes.
23. Tilly: And he give me some greasy old stuff.
24. Moyra: Did he?
25. Tilly: *Oooh my dear* I messed my vest and my night dress up.
26. Moyra: Oh dear.
27. Tilly: And had to soak em oh and I was wild when I had to do that I thought to miself well I don't know.
28. Moyra: Mmm.
29. Tilly: But I ne'er went no more after or anything I went and started straightaway to get that stuff.
30. Moyra: Did you where did you get that from?
31. Tilly: A chemist.
32. Moyra: And what about your headaches?
33. Tilly: That's lovely you put that on.
34. Moyra: Mmmm.
35. Tilly: And the heat it give out and as it cool take all the pain away.
36. Moyra: Lovely.
37. Tilly: That's the best stuff I've ever had in my life.
38. Moyra: Is it?
39. Tilly: They give me some stuff at the doctor's er er er a little tin.
40. Moyra: Mmm.
41. Tilly: Well the rubbish that was absolute rubbish.
42. Moyra: Was it?
43. Tilly: I you might just as well you know how Vaseline is?
44. Moyra: Yes.
45. Tilly: That might been just like Vaseline and the tin not not not as big as that round base.
46. Moyra: Really.

47. Tilly: I'd never see'd a stuff like it.
 48. Moyra: Goodness.
 49. Tilly: I thought miself *whatever* muck have I got here but I soon washed it all off and threw the whole tin in the bin I thought miself let me have some decent stuff and went and got that and
 50. Moyra: Mmm.
 51. Tilly: And that put on I was that take all the pain away you know if you got a headache or anything.
 52. Moyra: Does it?
 53. Tilly: Just put a little on there that take that away and go to sleep after.
 54. Moyra: Mmm.
 55. Tilly: And it sink in.
 56. Moyra: Well that's good to know.
 57. Tilly: And there's no no grease nor nothing after just like milk.
 58. Moyra: Is it?
 59. Tilly: Mmm clean.
 60. Moyra: That's lovely.
 61. Tilly: That' why I like it I shall allus buy that I'll never go to the doctor's no more waste my time and they give you the old stuff all grease oh my word no.
 62. Moyra: No no.
 63. Tilly: No mess your clothes up.
 64. Moyra: Does it well you don't want that do you?
 65. Tilly: I'll never do that no more.
 66. Moyra: No no.
 67. Tilly: I buy that.
 68. Moyra: You buy that.
 69. Tilly: You take the top off and smell.
 70. Moyra: Well oooh it smells nice it smells a bit like Germaline.
 71. Tilly: Aye?
 72. Moyra: Germaline I used to have when I was a child.
 73. Tilly: Oh.
 74. Moyra: It smells a bit like that do you know Germaline have you.
 75. Tilly: No I don't know it but that is the best stuff I ever had and you know it take all the pain away and you just go to sleep it's the finest thing out and my limbs are loose and everything and I can move twice now you get I got the stuff from the doctor and that warn't no good at all and that messed up my nightdress and all grease ooh I thought a miself.
 76. Moyra: Really.
 77. Tilly: Made me I threw it in the bin and I went and got that.
 78. 79. Moyra: Yes.
 79. Tilly: I thought to miself I never did see such muck as they tried to slip into me.
 80. Moyra: Oh dear.
 81. Tilly: It annoyed me you know.
 82. Moyra: Did it?
 83. Tilly: Yes waste of time going there.
 84. Moyra: Yes.
 85. Tilly: And then you don't get nothing that do you any good.
 86. Moyra: Dear.
 87. Tilly: Oh it ma I so never no more I keep that by me that's lovely you take the top off and smell it.
 88. Moyra: Mmm.
 89. Tilly: Would you like a piece of (cake).
 90. Moyra: Oh I'm droppping it.
 91. Tilly: Another piece of
 92. Moyra: No that's lovely a lovely smell.

93. Tilly: Get a drop use your finger put it on your hand.
94. Moyra: Yes.
95. Tilly: On top.
96. Moyra: How much does it cost you is it expensive? Oooh it is nice.
97. Tilly: It's nice and it get the heat and sink in and that's gone it's clean
98. Moyra: Yes.
99. Tilly: It's clean no grease or nothing.
100. Moyra: No.
101. Tilly: No no.
102. Moyra: No.
103. Tilly: No that's why I don't mind buying stuff like that but when you get that I had some stuff from the doctor oh and that was all grea oh mucky old stuff messed my vest and nightdress I had to soak em afterwards.
104. Moyra: Did you?
105. Tilly: This is alright this is well I was right disgusted.
106. Moyra: Oh dear.
107. Tilly: I was really.
108. Moyra: Yes.
109. Tilly: And that I got there there's no harm in that is there?
110. Moyra: No.
111. Tilly: And that take all the pain away too.
112. Moyra: Well that's what you want.
113. Tilly: Yes that's what you want.
114. Moyra: How much does it cost?
115. Tilly: And I I forget I forgot what it cost me cos I got two or three more things as well.
116. Moyra: Other things.
117. Tilly: Other things you see.
118. Moyra: When did you get that?
119. Tilly: I got it at Boots
120. Moyra: When did you get it?
121. Tilly: Aye?
122. Moyra: When?
123. Tilly: When oh I've had that for three weeks now.
124. Moyra: Have you?
125. Tilly: Yes I never put it on unless I have a pain and then I put it on then and go to bed you see.
126. Moyra: Yes yes.
127. Tilly: But that really take all the pain off and that's the finest stuff I've had that take the pain out soft the pai and you can go to sleep afterwards that's the best stuff I've ever had.
128. Moyra: Mmm.
129. Tilly: That beat any of the old doctor's muck old doctor's that they er leave grease on I though a miself I'll allus buy that.
130. Moyra: You keep that.
131. Tilly: Mentolatum Deep Heat.
132. Moyra: Yes very good.
133. Tilly: You see I forget how much it is but I shall buy some more I shall keep some by me that's the best stuff I've ever had.
134. Moyra: Mmm well that's good.
135. Tilly: Well I expect that that save wasting time going to the doctor's when you rub that on.
136. Moyra: Mmm.
137. Tilly: Yes.
138. Moyra: That's right.
139. Tilly: That's all I want put it on anywhere but that other stuff I got from the doctor's oh I was thoroughly disgusted.

140. Moyra: Oh dear
 141. Tilly: That was all grease and never warned you or anything else it may have been some old Vaseline stuff you stuck on yourself in fact I believe the Vaseline would have done it just as oh.
142. Moyra: Who is your doctor Tilly?
 143. Tilly: Aye?
 144. Moyra: Who's your doctor?
 145. Tilly: On () Road that's er one of the doctor's you see.
 146. Moyra: Have you been to see him lately?
 147. Tilly: No I haven't been there I don't often go to the doctor's if I can get the things to put on myself I don't go.
148. Moyra: You'd rather get your own.
 149. Tilly: I take Aspirins.
 150. Moyra: Do you?
 151. Tilly: I keep them by me and the stuff to rub on Deep Heat that stuff and that take all the pain out of my limbs if they're swollen or that doctor's stuff was full of grease and oh I thought to miself my vest and nightdress was messed up I though this is rubbish stuff I never go I won't go it's a waste of time to go.
152. Moyra: It is isn't it?
 153. Tilly: Yes.
 154. Moyra: Yes.
 155. Tilly: I won't go and take Aspros you see or Aspr no Aspirin Aspros.
 156. Moyra: Aspros.
 157. Tilly: Yes see and
 158. Moyra: For your headaches do you take those when you get a headache?
 159. Tilly: I know how to doctor miself so it's alright ((Laughs)).
 160. Moyra: You look after yourself don't you?
 161. Tilly: Yes as long as you can keep going.
 162. Moyra: You used to cook didn't you?
 163. Tilly: I used to get it in my head oh and it was terrible.
 164. Moyra: Was it?
 165. Tilly: You couldn't do nothing then I didn't know about that stuff the other stuff I used to rub it on I bought and it but that beat everything you take the top off and smell it.
166. Moyra: Alright oh.
 167. Tilly: See it's very good.
 168. Moyra: Good isn't it? Very strong.
 169. Tilly: I forget how much I give for it but if you want it you can have it.
 170. Moyra: Oh no love I don't want it.
 171. Tilly: No you don't but if any of your people like tell them about it it is good.
172. Moyra: Yes I'll tell them.
 173. Tilly: And it's a waste of time to go to the doctor's nowadays.
 174. Moyra: Sometimes.
 175. Tilly: You got (to wait).
 176. Moyra: It depends what you want.
 177. Tilly: I had I did I had I waited I waited oh no end of time in the doctor's I had a tin not as big as that saucer a tin as big as the top of that pot and it warn't a bit of good.
178. Moyra: Wasn't it?
 179. Tilly: No it didn't give no heat out I might have stuck some Vaseline on miself that's more what it looked like and er I threw it in the bin after I rubbed it on I thought a miself I don't know this isn't much good and in the bin it went I threw it out no heat nor nothing.
180. Moyra: No.

181. Tilly: So there you are so I now got I went and bought that in Boots and I said to the man I think I'll have that is that, good? He said well we sell a good bit of it mam.
182. Moyra: Did he?
183. Tilly: I say do you? Well that's a good point.
184. Moyra: Mmm.
185. Tilly: And that is too you don't want a lot and that take the pain away and you can go to sleep after.
186. Moyra: Mmm.
187. Tilly: That's the best stuff I've had just simple to remember Deep Heat.
188. Moyra: It is isn't it? Yes.
189. Tilly: And that is deep just get a thumbful and put on your hand and see.
190. Moyra: Yes I have done love.
191. Tilly: Did you? Oh there's the heat.
192. Moyra: Yes it is.
193. Tilly: That's splendid I can recommend that to anybody in fact my sister Martha what's at home now...

Appendix 4: Lunchtime at the Bruner's

1. Mrs Bruner: It does it looks nice out now (.) What do I do now?
2. Mr Bruner: Have our dinner.
3. Mrs Bruner: Ah off you go then mmm(.) ((Sound of a run of notes on the piano and then Mrs Bruner singing)) eeny meeny miny mo (.) What we doing? Aye? Is there only us two?
4. Mr Bruner: Yes there's only us two today.
5. Mrs Bruner: Why is that then?
6. Mr Bruner: Well there always is only us two.
7. Mrs Bruner: Aye?
8. Mr Bruner: There's only us two always.
9. Mrs Bruner: Oh I don't know ma duck what it's all about ah don't know mmm ((Singing)) (what it's all) about ma duck.
10. Mr Bruner: What it's all about.
11. Mrs Bruner: Ay don't know he he I'd like to go back to bed I would he eeny meeny miny mo ((Singing)) oh dear I do feel bad I do I'll go back in bed hey ((Singing)) de de dum eeny meeny miny mo (.) oh it's murder (.) murder mmmmm(.)
12. Mr Bruner: There you are here's your dinner.
13. Mrs Bruner: Oh lord Dave Oh you've given me all that.
14. Mr Bruner: Mmm yes.
15. Mrs Bruner: Oh Dave I don't know where am going to put it (.) I don't ma duck I don't know mmmmm
16. Mr Bruner: Now I've put you plenty of gravy on there's some more if you want.
17. Mrs Bruner: Aye?
18. Mr Bruner: There's some more if you want.
19. Mrs Bruner: I don't know what it's all about (.) aye (.) mmm ((Singsong)) (what it's) all about Dave. Have I got to start?
20. Mr Bruner: Yes you start.
21. Mrs Bruner: Oh dear don't aye? I don't know where we are ma duck aye? I don't know hey?.....I don't know (.) ((Humming)) de da dee de de de dade.
22. Mr Bruner: Hm hm.
23. Mrs Bruner: Mmmmmmm mmm mmm mmm () you.
24. Mr Bruner: Do you want a drink?
25. Mrs Bruner: I'm not going to eat all this lot.
26. Mr Bruner: Mm mm do you want a drink?
27. Mrs Bruner: Mm mm.
28. Mr Bruner: () to.
29. Mrs Bruner: Anything I ain't bothered ma duck mmm mmmmm (.) don't know ma duck I feel awful.
30. Mr Bruner: There you are.
31. Mrs Bruner: Mmmm (.) thank you mmm thank you mmmmm (.) tmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm mmmmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmm.
32. Mr Bruner: What's the matter?
33. Mrs Bruner: It's boiling.
34. Mr Bruner: Boiling.
35. Mrs Bruner: Mm.
36. Mr Bruner: No I don't think it is.
37. Mrs Bruner: Mmmm it is it's all boiling mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmm(.) Dave how the heck I'm going to eat it I don't know mmm ((Sing song)) (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) Have I got to eat all this?
38. Mr Bruner: Yes.
39. Mrs Bruner: Oh Dave (.) mmmmm I feel about full mi duck

40. Mr Bruner: Start a bit there
41. Mrs Bruner: Aye?
42. Mr Bruner: You've hardly started
43. Mrs Bruner: Oh murder mmm
44. Mr Bruner: I didn't put you a lot on because I thought you wouldn't eat it.
45. Mrs Bruner: Mmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm (.) oh I do feel bad he he.(.) mmm
(.)mmmmmmmm.(.). mmmmmmm (.) I can't eat no more Dave he he (.)
oh dear not yet he he mm.
46. Mr Bruner: Take your time.
47. Mrs Bruner: Oh it's murder mm.
48. Mr Bruner: Take your time.
49. Mrs Bruner: Murder (.) oh I do feel bad he he mmmmm he he mmm.
50. Mr Bruner: Let me cut it up for you a bit.
51. Mrs Bruner: Oh I'm full up ma duck he he.
52. Mr Bruner: You haven't eaten much at all come on.
53. Mrs Bruner: Oh oh it's murder he he.
54. Mr Bruner: Look it's nice look at all that.
55. Mrs Bruner: I know but don't leave it hey.
56. Mr Bruner: Come on.
57. Mrs Bruner: Oh leave it Dave don't I can't eat it if you keep messing it up
((Crossly)) oh no mmm I don't feel a bit hungry. I'd love to go back to
bed he he eeny meeny miny mo oh I'd love to go back to bed mmm
mmmmmmmmmm(.) mmmmm(.) mmm don't give me any more Dave it's
awful no I don't feel a bit hungry (.) I'd love to go back to bed he he
(.) I would (.) I feel awful (.) eeny meeny miny (.) Oh I do feel bad (.)
never felt so bad in my life never he he he er murder (.) mmmmmmm
(.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) ar dear (.) aye I do
feel bad (.) oh it's murder mm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) never felt so bad (.)
eeny meeny miny mo murder (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmmmm (.)
mmmmmmmmmmmm (.) What's that Dave what that's supposed to be?
It's a microphone.
58. Mr Bruner: Aye?
59. Mrs Bruner: It's a microphone.
60. Mr Bruner: Well what's that for?
61. Mrs Bruner: Well we're taping what we talk about.
62. Mr Bruner: Oh I don't know he he no I can't be bothered he he.
63. Mrs Bruner: Try and eat a bit more meat.
64. Mr Bruner: Oh I can't he he () on ().
65. Mrs Bruner: Will you have some sweet?
66. Mr Bruner: I don't know he her.
67. Mrs Bruner: We've got you can have prunes and custard.
68. Mr Bruner: I don't know.
69. Mrs Bruner: Or apple tart would you like apple tart?
70. Mr Bruner: I don't know ((Indistinctly)).
71. Mrs Bruner: Come on.
72. Mr Bruner: What's all this about?
73. Mrs Bruner: What?
74. Mr Bruner: All this I ain't ate any of this.
75. Mrs Bruner: No you haven't started try and eat a little bit.
76. Mr Bruner: ((Crossly)) *Well what's the good when I ain't hungry aye?*
77. Mrs Bruner: Well I don't know why you shouldn't be hungry you didn't have much
breakfast.
78. Mr Bruner: What's all this lot oh murder mmmmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm
(.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm
(.) mmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmm
() in here).
79. Mrs Bruner: Mmmmmmmmm (.) Are we going to go out?
80. Mr Bruner: No not today.
81. Mrs Bruner:
82. Mr Bruner:

83. Mrs Bruner: Good job then (.) mmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm I'd love to go back to bed he he he (.) mmmmm I would (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmm ((Coughs)) (.) mmmmm don't know where we are hm hm or what we're doing mmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) ((Coughs)) mmmmm. (.) mmmmmmmmmmm I'll have lie down I feel awful.
84. Mr Bruner: When you've had your dinner.
85. Mrs Bruner: Mmm.
86. Mr Bruner: You can go and have a lie down.
87. Mrs Bruner: Mmmmm I do feel bad he mmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm (.) No (.) I dunno where we are he he mm mmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmm Ar don't know ma duck (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mm. .mmmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmm (.) mm (.) mmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm' (.) mmmmmmmmmmm (.) lie down I don't want to eat any more Dave I've had enough dinner.
88. Mr Bruner: No thank you I've nearly finished now I couldn't eat any more.
89. Mrs Bruner: Are we going to save this for tomorrow are we?
90. Mr Bruner: No we'll throw that away eat a bit more of your meat that will do you good.
91. Mrs Bruner: Mmm (.) I can't (.) I can't get at it ma duck (.) no he he he *eeny meeny miny mo* he he.
92. Mr Bruner: Mm.
93. Mrs Bruner: Awful oh (look here)?
94. Mr Bruner: Yes it's all nice chicken.
95. Mrs Bruner: Mm don't know what it's supposed to have been mm (.) mmm (.) mmm ((Coughs very loudly)) Oh I can't get it (.) mmmmmmm mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmm oh no (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) mmmmm (.) Can't (bury) me away he he mmm dear.
96. Mr Bruner: Now then I'll make some custard.
97. Mrs Bruner: (.) mmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmm mmmmmmmmmmm (.) mmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mi handkerchief he he oh dear isn't it murder mmmmmmm (.) I don't think I can eat any more Dave.
98. Mr Bruner: OK leave it there or something I'll sort it out in a minute.
99. Mrs Bruner: I'm full up ma duck erm ((Both hum).)
100. Mrs Bruner: Mmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmmmm (.) mmmmmmm he he he he mmmmmmmmm What's that? Did you just put it there?
101. Mr Bruner: Mm.
102. Mrs Bruner: Well I was going to say it ain't mine he he.
103. Mr Bruner: Leave it there.